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The Christian Tradition and Contemporary Creation

BY THOMAS J. BEARY

IT IS of paramount significance to our intellectual, spiritual and artistic lives that we live in an epoch of cultural transition; not merely change: the experts tell us that the world's stage is not just being reset; it is revolving: something quite different will greet the eyes of the spectators when the revolution is complete. Cultural lags, as well as flux and turmoil in the domain of values, are overt clues to the profound evolution which has penetrated almost every stratum of human activity. Of cultural lags, probably none is so obvious as that between scientific progress and the ability of mankind to keep stride with it: nuclear physicists presented us with the radioactive key to the city of tomorrow—and most of us began to look around for some place to hide. Everyone admits that our use of radio, movies and television has been adolescent, but nobody does anything about it. Cybernetics, with its ever-expanding mathematical brains, contains implications with which we seem unable or unwilling to cope, as do Einstein's latest formulations and military experiments with rockets which soar at supersonic speed far into the stratosphere.

Cultural lag exists on other planes than scientific, of course. Social and economic stratification, geographic isolation, physical and legalistic barriers between the people of the earth are incompatible with the realities of modern transportation and communication. The exigencies of the twentieth century postulate one world, not compartmentalized human groupings called nations. The U.N. building in New York symbolizes the wide awareness that our world should be an international one, or at least one whose destiny is guided by a responsible and powerful international organization. But, ironically, the U.N. is controlled by outmoded nationalistic groupings whose disunity may yet destroy it. Other indications of cultural transition are seen in our seeming inability to achieve world-wide economic stability despite improved methods of harvesting and moving the abundant natural resources of the earth and in our inability to prevent terribly destructive international conflagrations. Some see evidence of a great cultural transformation in the militant awakening of the Asiatics and the already perceptible shift of power from West to East. Others see it in the spread of socialism and in the disquieting testimony of our artists—perhaps our most sensitive recorders of cultural crisis. Anthropologists and sociologists tell us that these and other signs indicate that the world in which we live is undergoing so profound a change that existing institutions

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and contemporary mentality cannot keep up with it; that the old framework of our culture, unable to respond to new challenges, no longer valid in the crucial test of transition, is slowly crumbling in its entirety and a new civilization emerging

Contemporary literature is therefore being created in a period of profound cultural change. It does not enjoy the stability and certitudes which a non-transitional culture furnishes. Unless there are powerful compensatory factors such as ethnic, racial, or religious homogeneity or a rich, complex and widely received literary tradition at work, it would be too much to expect that any considerable portion of twentieth-century writing would escape the transitional character of the time.

Does America present its writers with a background of ethnic and racial unity? The national aborigines were Indians; the sixteenth-century saw the advance of the Caucasian race; Negroes were introduced later and now number some 14,000,000; and members of the Mongoloid race are found on the East and West coasts. More than the graphs and statistic of ecologists, an observing walk through the streets of any large American city will reveal that contemporary United States is the offspring of many races. New York City, for example, has its Jewish, Irish, German, Italian, Chinese and Negro sections. Eighty-eight different nations are represented in the student body of Columbia University. The presence in our country of large numbers of immigrants from Italy, Germany, Russia, Poland, England, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Greece, Mexico, and recently Puerto Rico, forcibly underscores our ethnic and racial heterogeneity. Stability for the contemporary American writer in time of cultural transition does not lie in this direction.

A third factor militating against the permanence of much of our creative literature is the "disintegration of belief." Joseph Wood Krutch in *The Modern Temper*, Henry Steele Commager in *The American Mind*, and John U. Neff, in *The United States and Civilization* are among the many who testify that institutionalized religion is no longer the integrative and dynamic force of our national life, and that such religious beliefs as Americans do retain are pluralistic. Liberalism has become the modern faith, writes Henry Bamford Parkes in *The Pragmatic Test*, and according to liberalism "men need no authoritative code of values . . . to guide or discipline them. [Its advocates] have denied the need for objective moral standards of any kind, declaring that each man has a right to free self-development." A religious revival now seems to be getting under way in the United States and if it continues will have something to do with shaping our creative literature of the next fifty years. But the revival has a long way to go: the centripetal pull of our times is clearly materialistic and secular, not spiritual. In a moment of cultural transition, in a nation of

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ethnic and racial heterogeneity, there are lacking to our poets and prose writers the verities, stability and standards which a secure religious culture could supply.

And is there lacking also a salvific tradition? It was a rare commentator on American literature who, in the years between the wars, did not devote at least one chapter to the "desperate individualism," the "destructive element," the traditionless plight of American writers. As Robert Stallman has shown (*A Southern Vanguard*, p. 29), the Southern critics have joined T. S. Eliot in pointing to "the limiting and crippling effect upon our literature of a separation from a living and central tradition. . . . Our age lacks a scheme of experience such as Christianity afforded medieval Europe." And Elizabeth Drew wrote in *Directions in Modern Poetry*:

Cut off from traditional channels of communication with these universal values of a great past, the modern poet is left with meager spiritual equipment—the psychology of the unconscious, the Marxian dialectic and a sense of frustration.

The result of this widely acknowledged "lack of traditionalism" has been that modern American prose and poetry have been marked and marred by admittedly subjective values and criteria, by relative, often shifting standards, by "tortured sensibilities," "sensualism and gross irrationalities," as well as tension, violence, naturalism, twisted characters, contrived obscurity and the hardly unmistakable sheen of impermanence. Certain critics, pitying the darkness of poets and novelists, took them firmly by the hand and led them into the successive bogs of Naturalism, Freudianism, Lost Generationism and Marxism, for the critic no more than the creative writer possessed a "principle of authority and intelligence, a stable frame of reference for values and actions." Future literary historians will probably lament the dissipation of so much real talent and ask themselves what might have been the result if ours were not a transitional cultural and literary epoch, or if our writers had possessed a great and widely received tradition such as Christianity afforded Chaucer, Dante, and Cervantes.

ACTUALLY, such a salvific tradition continues to be available to American creative writers. Or to be more precise: the same Christian tradition which sustained Dante is at the service of anyone who can accept the basal postulates of Christianity. It is an enduring and augmentable heritage of philosophy, culture and religion rising out of the Hebraeo-Graeco-Latin-Christian civilization and supplying the referents, norms, and symbols for contemporary Christian life and art. It is a complex religious, intellectual, cultural and artistic heritage reaching the individual writer of today and providing him with standards and values of literary evaluation and creation for the appraisal

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of movements, policies and intellectual currents bearing on the world of literary creation.

What is the incidence of Christian theology upon literary creation? It can be replied at once that, unlike the Marxist tradition which frankly subordinates literature to its socio-political tactics, the Christian tradition does not consider literature ancillary to religion; nor does it ever allow piety to be made the yardstick of literary approval, or religious zeal to substitute for apprenticeship. As it comes to bear on writing, the concern of the Christian tradition is literature, which is conceived of as an end in itself. However, the tradition does not subscribe to the theory of an absolute divorce between art and morality, and literature is recognized as only a *relative* end which must never militate against man's final end, union with God. Therefore the literature of the Christian tradition does not deny the existence of God or imply that it cannot be known; nor does it challenge the Church's position that the writer, as a person with free will, is amenable to divine law and is under the imperious necessity of arranging his private and artistic existence so that these do not bring him into conflict with the Divine will. Theology is further relevant in that it provides the ultimate basis for the Christian traditionalist's criticism of Naturalism, Primitivism, literary Freudianism, Marxism, Positivism, non-Christian Existentialism and other "isms" which spiral through the literary world and militate against Christian teaching. Theology, of course, provides the master beliefs, the invariable concepts (such as that of man's spiritual nature) and the fundamental values of the Christian writer. And finally theology is relevant in revealing that sanctifying grace has immediate reference to literary creativity, for it enriches the natural powers of the human soul, illumines the natural intelligence so that the closer the writer comes to the Source of all life, the clearer the light with which he sees reality and the more creative and dynamic his work even when it is not explicitly religious.

The philosophical superstructure of the Christian literary tradition rises from its theological base. Resting within the mighty shadow of the Church, Thomism supplies much of the structural steel of this framework. Thomism possesses its own theory of knowledge, logic, cosmology, psychology, metaphysics, esthetics and theodicy, and Neo-Thomists have directed their studies into many fields of human endeavor, such as science and social justice. Thomistic esthetics is well-developed but far from being a closed subject. If Jacques Maritain, Mortimer Adler, Thomas Gilby, Albert Steiss, John Duffy and Leonard Callagan were to meet they would find much to discuss—and much upon which no unanimous agreement could be reached. Centered, as every esthetics must be, in the discussion of beauty, Thomistic esthetics insists that a fine art is an end in itself (but not an absolute end) and should not be conceived of as a propaganda vehicle for any cause. The esthetics which the Christian tradition

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makes available to the writer is particularly rich in its analysis of the nature and externalization of the esthetic intuition, and in its presentation and defense of poetic knowledge. It understands the role of reason and imagination in artistic creation and frequently, for instance in Adler's *Art and Prudence*, has examined the valence of morality on the work of art. Albert Steiss and the Catholic Poetry Society of America have turned their attention to distinguishing between the esthetic and ascetical intuition; and the Society seems to have made distinct contributions to Thomistic esthetics not only in the theoretic presentation of the place of rhyme and rhythm in poetic composition and of the necessary universality, communicability and disinterestedness of real poetry, but in the impressive attempts to wed practice and theory in the Society's publication, *Spirit*. In short, while Thomistic esthetics may still be said to be in a state of development (as Eliot has pointed out, one can never write *stet* to a living tradition), it has certainly developed to the point where it can intellectually satisfy the reasonable demands of contemporary literary creation.

The testimony of the Christian literary past is clearly to the effect that the literary artist was always thought of as a responsible individual of more than ordinary intellectual and linguistic attainments; that his art was disciplined by long apprenticeship, and that, while it did not have the minimal intelligence for its target, his work was meant to be communicable to far more than the esoteric few. Nor, despite the receptivity of the Christian literary tradition to genuine discoveries in the area of figurative language, rhyme-variation, montage of symbol or incident, delineation of character or the effective presentation of plot or setting, did the Christian artist think that the approbation of discriminate critics or any real permanence could be achieved by mere technical virtuosity or stylistic innovation.

Culturally rich, philosophically and theologically deep, the Christian tradition, as it projects into literature, offers today's writers the values, norms, challenge and objective standards admirably calculated to supply for their philosophical and moral relativism, hyper-subjectivity and too-easily-variable criteria. As a matter of historic fact it preserved Catholic writers from the excesses—philosophical and artistic—of the past half-century, and has supported the literary efforts (sometimes experimental, such as Thomas Merton's and J. F. Powers') of the best of them. The extension of the Christian worldview, with its rich treasury of nearly two millenia of art experience, into contemporary literary creativity, the Christian literary tradition eliminates the attrition of a writer's trying to construct his own framework of belief while simultaneously striving to produce something deserving of universality and permanence. The Christian tradition projects beyond literature, of course, and enlightens the path of the writer as he considers his responsibilities in the fields of publishing, politics, education and in the universe of ideas

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and actions wherein he moves; but it is the Christian as creative artist we must concentrate upon here, and I submit that nowhere on the horizon of contemporary literary activity does there appear a rival for the tradition we have been discussing.

PROFOUND, rich and "usable" as is the Christian literary tradition, it would be over-simplification of the most naive kind to claim that the tradition has solved all problems which the contemporary Christian writer in America may confront. Whatever his ideological frame of reference and abundant spiritual energy, the writer in the critical moment of literary creativity confronts the immobile typewriter and can smash its metallic perversity only by a combination of personal qualities which no tradition can directly assign. The tradition will not supply for literary genius or appreciably shorten the Lent of apprenticeship. It will not automatically supply publishing outlets so that the Christian writer can publish the majority of his best work with dignity and prestige. Nor will it guarantee a mature reading audience—at least not to the extent that the writer will be assured of a reasonable and steady income and thus be encouraged to continue with the exacting moral and literary standards which the tradition sets for him. Nor has it thus far resolved a problem which is of particular importance to young Catholic writers of today, a problem which, according to so level-headed a critic as Francis X. Connolly, is potentially capable of atrophying Catholic literary creativity in America. This is the problem of whether the Catholic writer should work as far as possible in an exclusive Catholic milieu, or whether, using the framework of the Christian tradition at least as a point of departure, jump into the secular sea, strike out shoulder to shoulder with writers basically opposed to the postulates of the tradition, adopt their terms, techniques and some of their norms, and strive to reach the same elusive goal (B.O.M. selection; Critics Circle Award, Pulitzer or Nobel Prize). Isolation or intervention—in which direction lies the fulfillment of the Christian tradition in our time?

The proponents of the isolationist position know that the strength of the Christian tradition derives directly from its theological base, and they are of the opinion that divorced from the Church and breathing secular air, Christian writers would lose their dynamism and produce a pallid, impermanent and essentially un-Christian literature. The isolationists take the position that Catholicism is not an esoteric hobby like numismatics or heraldry to be indulged in leisure moments; its connotations and positive effects spill over into the lives of all who have come to realize what Catholicism means, they assert. It is difficult for the isolationists to see how anyone subscribing to the eternal verities of the Christian tradition can think and write as one neu-

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tral to the great truths of Christianity; and compromising with the secular mentality of the best-seller and the "slick" is not a neutral position, they hasten to add, any more than is religious-free education a compromise between education with religion and education free of religion. They are deeply concerned with literary commentators who call for Catholics to write like Faulkner, Wolfe, or Mann. To write in this manner involves more than the neutralization of the precious gifts of grace and the negation of the whole Christian literary tradition, they hold; it involves the positive acceptance of a mental viewpoint hostile to the faith. For, asserts Mr. Connolly, even as Christianity is a creative, shaping and energizing force ("form") in the writing of Christians, so Naturalism, Freudianism, Marxism, Primitivism, Decadence, Positivism and non-Christian Existentialism are the essential and determining "forms" of the prose and poetry produced by some of the leading twentieth-century writers. It is therefore intrinsically impossible for the Christian tradition to produce a James T. Farrell or a Theodore Dreiser because the "forms" of Christian and Naturalistic writing are philosophically, semantically and artistically polar. The term *form* extends to more than the mental attitude, more than the paraphrasable content of the poem or story, to more than atmosphere or mood; it includes such things as symbolism, contorted and truncated imagery, alogical montage of incident or language, stream-of-consciousness, the guttural staccato of Primitivistic dialogue, the mesmerized posturing of incest-hungry degenerates, or the mountains of undigested facts of the Naturalists. It includes any technique consistently employed by writers of one of the anti-Christian "isms" to demonstrate their point, such as pathologically frustrated characters, environs of despair or an atmosphere of violence where intelligent thinking would be anomalous and a balanced sentence a blasphemy. Of technique in this sense, Mr. Connolly has written in *Thought*: "The Catholic writer who thinks he can adapt the techniques of modern art without implicitly accepting the ethos of the modern world is in serious error."

Approaching from a different angle, the isolationists remark: Consider the Christians who are widely recognized today for their literary proficiency: Eliot, Charles Williams, Claudel, Bernanos, Merton and Lowell. Did they adopt a secular vision of literary "form" in order to achieve influence and wide success? On the other hand, consider the gifted writers, once united with the Church, who surrendered to the lure of secular "forms": Ernest Hemingway, Eugene O'Neill, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and others. Is it not ominous that it became equally impossible for them to remain loyal to their "form" and to their Christian tradition and that of the two, it seems to have been the basic verities of the tradition which were found expendable? Nothing is more certain than that time will expose the meretriciousness of most of our

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contemporary writing; technically competent Christian literature, the literature of discipline, selectivity, spiritual light and perennial human values, has a much greater chance of permanence than *From Here to Eternity*. Eliot has shown that adherence to the Christian tradition need not be a hindrance to fame or financial security. And the defenders of isolationism point quietly to the sustained success of the Catholic Poetry Society which has offered conclusive proof that Christian art can flourish (if it consciously maintains its own spiritual, philosophic and artistic center) in a non-traditional society and by its flourishing enrich the entire culture. The failure of Catholic literature in America has not been a failure of technique, insists Mr. Connolly: it has been the failure of abundant spiritual dynamism. It should be self-evident, he concludes, that the Catholic cannot renew his spiritual energy in the secular milieu and by peering at reality through the spectacles of atheistic literary forms.

Those who oppose the isolationist theory assert that the problem confronting Catholic authors today is the same as that confronting American Catholics generally, and that it is no more possible—or desirable—for Catholic writers to maintain an exclusive attitude and art than it is for 28,000,000 Catholics to insulate themselves from their fellow Americans. Only by throwing themselves into the democratic struggle can Catholic writers hope to make the American literary milieu safe for the eternal verities of the Christian tradition. Those who assert this are convinced that the Christian tradition will become parochial if it attempts to remain aloof from the literary life of the nation, that the isolationists will render it invaluable in their understandable but misguided attempt to keep it inviolate by wrapping it in the cellophane of a non-existing Catholic culture. The Catholic writer, like the Catholic scientist and the Catholic scholar, must address himself to all men, not just his fellow Catholics, insist the interventionists, and he must utilize whatever procedures and techniques will gain him an impartial hearing in university and literary circles. This does not mean that he has to abandon the Christian tradition—certainly not its theological verities—or address himself *exclusively* to a secular audience. Greene, Waugh, McLaverty, Richard Sullivan and J. F. Powers seem perfectly capable of speaking to the city and the world without repudiating their religion, assert the opponents of isolationism.

The interventionists would plead with speculative thinkers to balance theory with historic fact. We live in an era, they explain patiently, when it is impossible for all our children to attend Catholic schools and for all our authors to write for a Catholic market. For a complex of reasons, including the feeble advertising power of Catholic houses, the low rates paid by Catholic periodicals and their seeming inability to publish the kind of writing which brings *success d'estime*, the Catholic writer, possessed of fine talent and of a landlord who

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prefers the present to the remote good, must turn to secular publishers, to press, radio and publicity work. (Look back over the three short story collections of Sister Mariella: notice how infrequently the stories originated in Catholic magazines.) The interventionists here inquire whether it is not a grave disservice to the nascent Catholic Revival to call its poets, playwrights and novelists into an isolation which only a small percentage of them can, as an inescapable matter of fact, accept. If you sow the dark seed of guilt in the consciences of thousands of writers you must be prepared to reap the harvest of frustration, warn the interventionists. They do not deny the real need for creative writers who, with admirable independence of mind and wallet, will speak from the fullness of grace of the things that are God's and thus become known as exclusive "Catholic" or perhaps "apologetic" writers. In their opinion, however, two other types of author will more successfully cope with the real exigencies and opportunities of the Christian tradition today: those who, like T. S. Eliot and Charles Williams, remain closely associated with the tradition but whose genius commands respect and whose utilization of secular techniques allow them to demonstrate their literary proficiency in terms which secular critics cannot possibly overlook; or writers like Graham Greene or Robert Lowell, who let their lights of faith and talent shine before the world, in a code recognizable to secular literary commentators, more frequently than they turn them unwaveringly and exclusively on the terrestrial city of God. The millenium will come when artistically brilliantly equipped Catholic writers—saintly and otherwise—will stop talking to themselves and dominate all branches of American writing from avant-garde poetry to creative scholarship. The interventionists are willing to concede that it will be some time before this happens, but they think that we are under way already and that we shall keep gathering momentum unless a third world war or some unrealistic advice from the isolationist camp detours our talent into a permanent dead-end.

The interventionist rises in energetic protest at the hanging of NO-ADMITTANCE-TO-CATHOLIC-AUTHORS signs around a large number of modern literary techniques. There is basic agreement between the two schools that the Catholic author cannot adopt the mentality of the Naturalist (or any anti-Christian) ideology. The interventionists are frank to admit that the same perils attend participation in the secular literary milieu as attend Catholics in secular education; they will not deny that problems—which, of course, would have to be resolved in another forum than the literary—might arise for certain Catholics even in reading the material of a writer like Faulkner. But this does not change the real contextual need of writers in a secular milieu, nor does it automatically make certain art processes unavailable to Catholics. The interventionists, asking for facts and deductions logically derived from them, are unwilling, without great modification, to subscribe to the theory that ideolo-

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gies "inform" literature to the extent of shaping literary technique. They grant without wrist-twisting that the literary Freudians have utilized diffracted imagery, alogical montage and stream-of-consciousness, and that Naturalists and Primitivists have used the "hard-boiled" style and impersonal reportage. But they point to Naturalists and Primitivists who have used techniques and achieved affects not usually associated with the Naturalist or Primitivist "form" (see stories by John Steinbeck, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway in the Sister Mariella anthologies); and they are able to point to Catholic writers who have not hesitated to use the techniques of Marxism (John Bunker) or Freudianism (Eliot in *The Cocktail Party*) or Naturalism (Morley Callaghan; Robert Bowen). They would insist that nothing in Thomistic esthetics implies that literary "form" is autotelic, necessarily, *apart from the artist*, shaping technique. It is the poet (the maker) who, as the instrumental cause, determines and brings forth the work of art from intuition to external pattern. Certain techniques may come to be consistently used by the artists of a certain ideology and to be associated with that ideology, but there is *nothing metaphysical about the association*. A logical corollary to the theory that ideology "informs" literature is that no non-Catholic writer should appear in Sister Mariella's anthologies of Catholic short stories and that as a writer changes his ideology he also changes his technique; John Dos Passos evidently hadn't heard of the latter "rule" when he wrote *The Grand Design*, and Dali refused to abandon "diabolical" surrealism when he painted his Port Lligat Madonna. The interventionists agree that it is folly for Catholic critics to shout for a Christian Hemingway or Faulkner; but they insist that Harry Sylvester or Robert Bowen are entitled to imitate Hemingway's dialogue or his casual mastery of violence, and that if they are discreet enough to skirt the phosphorescence of moral decay which lights the swamps in Faulkner's novels, they may learn much concerning locale and suspense from *Intruder in the Dust*. Ideologies can be intrinsically evil; techniques are essentially tools, tools which can be made to serve the Light as they have served the Darkness. The interventionists point once more to Eliot, Greene and Mauriac, and assert that spiritually mature Catholic artists can straighten out craftsmanship, technique and every servicable art process which has been deflected by false philosophies but which is, in most cases, not intrinsically evil. The interventionists make no special plea for any technique; they object in the name of common sense and of the rich variability of the Christian literary past to the *a priori* elimination of hundreds of techniques from contemporary Christian literature. To insist on such elimination, they are sincerely convinced, is to impoverish the Christian tradition unnecessarily, to impair its contribution to American literature and to raise a problem for talented Catholic writers which might, indeed, atrophy their creative powers.

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THE reason why the Christian tradition has not resolved this problem is that both solutions are acceptable. No matter which one the Catholic writer (the conscious and grateful heir to the Christian tradition) chooses he will not atrophy or distort his art if he remains unwaveringly loyal to the eternal verities of the tradition. An exclusively Christian, artistically scintillating and style-dictatorial milieu would indeed be the ideal solution; but this awaits a distant Christian culture. Meanwhile, for most Catholic writers, compromise and intervention seem necessary and the real question becomes to what extent these can be practiced. If it means surrender of the Christian vision, compromise with a secular literary world is not countenanced by the tradition. But the rich history of the tradition suggests that the utility of *any* technique to the nascent Catholic Revival can be considered on its own merits: there is no necessity for condemning it out of court. Of course, *both* Catholicism and literary skill must be strengthened if American Catholic writing is to achieve permanence and if it is to gain serious recognition from secular critics, and clearly, the deeper the penetration of the secular literary world the further should the writer's roots be sunk in the soil of Christian spirituality. The tradition guarantees that as long as the Christian writer retains his essential Catholicity he may travel the universe of art in search of techniques and patterns. Whether contemporary Christian writers travel or remain at home, the tradition, alive in the present as in the past, will absorb their efforts. Like a great river it will flow through the channels which contemporary Christian art demands, itself essentially unchanged, carrying forward the new, rich soil of legitimate experimentation and leaving behind the flotsam and jetsam of dead ideas and outmoded techniques.

The Critical Method of Charles Du Bos

BY WALTER NAUMANN

CHARLES DU BOS (1882-1939) is now becoming recognized, in France and abroad, as one of the great French writers of the period between 1920 and 1940 and as one of the great French critics of all times. His stature is clearly brought out by the publication of his complete diaries, which has been in progress since 1946. So far four volumes have been published (by Corr  a, Paris), covering the years 1921-1928, with more than 1600 pages of text. The diary is the main work of Du Bos. He had himself published only extracts from it for the years 1908-1928 (*Extraits d'un Journal*, 1928). His critical essays were offered in seven volumes with the title *Approximations*. There are, besides, books on individual authors, on Byron, Andr   Gide, Fran  ois Mauriac, and Benjamin Constant. Four lectures in English, given in 1938 at the University of Notre Dame when Du Bos taught there, were published under the title *What is Literature?* (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1940) and can serve as an admirable introduction to the thinking of Du Bos. Angelo Philip Bertocci (*Charles Du Bos and English Literature*, King's Crown Press, 1949) was the first to undertake a detailed analysis of the philosophical and literary background and of the method of Du Bos. There is also an excellent paper on him by Herbert Dieckmann (in *Symposium*, III, November 1947, 31-45).

One of the important aspects characteristic of French literature at the beginning of the twentieth century is the fact that the leading writers belonged to society. Proust, Gide, and others moved freely in the highest circles of French society. Du Bos belonged to this group. The writings of Du Bos rest on an intellectual exchange with others on a highly cultured level. Conversations with his literary friends (cf. the title: *Le Dialogue avec Andr   Gide*) or courses offered by him in aristocratic houses were the basis for many of his essays. Du Bos lived so intensely with his friends that often, in his writings, he expresses an opinion stated by "one of us." Problems and their developments were common property. This group was European in its cultural outlook. Du Bos himself was partly English and had studied in Oxford; in his youth he had been greatly influenced by German intellectual life, especially the lectures of the philosopher Simmel. Du Bos and his friends, in the incomparable atmosphere of Paris, were interested in all forms of artistic expression. Music and painting were as important to them as literature. One

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must know this general situation in order to understand the premises of the work of Du Bos. It was a situation that had recurred at the great periods of French intellectual history and that is typical of French civilization: the leading spirits, in exchange and emulation, advancing and clarifying the intellectual and moral issues of the time. The general tenor of these endeavors, at the beginning of the twentieth century, was given by a prevailing interest in criticism. Even for the great artists, like Proust or Gide, the critical investigations into other works of art were an important part of their creative activities. It was an age of self-consciousness.

The personal circumstances of the life of Charles Du Bos have become quite clear, and even poignantly so, to his readers only from the recent publications of his complete diaries. The man who in his other writings seemed to us to live in a secure and serene world where only endeavors of the mind count, appears here as a prey to the distractions of life. He is a harassed "homme de lettres," who has to make a living by writing, lecturing, directing periodicals, and supervising translations. We also see him for a great part of his life a victim of illness. But at the same time we see, in these diaries, the undaunted courage and perseverance with which, in the midst of distractions and illness, Du Bos never for a moment loses sight of his goal. He is always living with the great creations of the human mind, striving for a deeper understanding of these works of art and thought, to enable himself to make spiritual progress. He is, among the great artists of his generation, the "moralist," in the sense in which the French use this word for writers like Montaigne or Joubert.

WHEN Du Bos approaches the work of a writer whom he wants to understand, he does so with a question that reveals immediately the whole nature of his critical attitude. He is little interested in whether an artist's individuality appears more or less in the form of his creative work as a consequence of his technical skill or lack of it. That would be a purely esthetic question, and an answer to it would only establish the relationship between the artist's intention and his achievements in the artistic field. In no way would it indicate the relationship between the poetic expression and a human essence. In his remarks on Stendhal and Mérimée, his first literary productions, and in many passages of his daybook, Du Bos investigates those elements of diction which present a necessity that the author himself cannot escape. Du Bos finds out that it is a man's style, his "tone" and "tempo," which betrays him, which does not leave him a choice. Particularly the word "tempo" is dear to Du Bos, who thus likens man to a melody. If an author arbitrarily seeks to abandon his tempo, he would thereby endanger his individuality and his claim to true art.

This question of a truly ethical nature concerns sincerity of expression and belongs to a sphere to which Du Bos once gave the designation "moralité

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intellectuelle," ethic of the intellect. On the other hand, "tempo" can be investigated only by the methods of psychology, methods which are applied by one who has himself tried to give expression to his thoughts. This type of investigation necessarily produces a non-historical criticism, for it considers only contemporary authors or it studies all of them as if they were contemporaries. A psychological method of investigation can be strictly brought to bear only upon contemporaries whose historical environment we thoroughly comprehend since it is identical with our own.

In the light of his own creative efforts, the critic wants to know what is "tempo," what is this genuine key to an understanding of an individuality? To what extent are we really what we think we are? Who in us is our self? Our innermost self speaks when a God enters into us. When we are exalted above ourselves—"fine frenzy," says Keats; a voice speaks in us that cannot be deceived and cannot deceive. However this exaltation is not permanent. It is momentary; its natural product is an isolated piece, a fragment. To fuse these fragments into a composite whole, to complete a work without this inspiration requires a minimum of effort, not inherent in the original creative production. The urge, the will to finish a work is something from the outside and strictly speaking is a part of the will to power. In the born artist this urge functions without hesitation.

The man given to reflection and introspection, however, regards as an act of caprice the attempt to finish and elaborate an inspired thought into a composite work. That is the attitude of Du Bos when he writes of himself. Only what comes forth genuinely at an inspired moment is true and worth retaining. The word which Du Bos loves to use for creative activity, he borrows from physiology—"sécréter," to secrete. To him any kind of "transformation"—a vital necessity for any artist—appears to change the genuine into the artificial; he refuses and is unable to accomplish it. Du Bos has but one desire, truth, which is attained by virtue of "sincerity." Every individual has his own truth and his highest purpose is to express this truth. Du Bos considers the natural form of creative writing to be a fragment. So he prefers a journal which he begins anew each day.

He has other reasons for this also. Du Bos distinguishes between minds organized architecturally and minds organized musically. By every consideration he himself belongs to the second class. He does not naturally perceive the necessity of an orderly *vue d'ensemble* or of a hierarchy. It is impossible for him to follow any kind of plan while writing, and his work shows this lack of preconceived arrangement. His idea shapes itself only at the moment of its expression; the thought and its picture appear concomitantly in a "corps lumineux." A favorite word of Du Bos is "informer" which, in the philosophy of St. Thomas, means "to unite matter and form." In reading his essays one

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feels that he works his way through deepest ground, following the hidden mineral vein.

Since "tempo" is the basic line of an individuality, appearing throughout every part of an author's work, the observer may pause at every division to "crown" each single part. Du Bos' mind dwells on a thought. Few can interpret as he can the spirit of a sentence or the importance of a life's moment. His style is like the onrush of waves, which grope eternally to discover the form of the rocks against which they surge endlessly. This figure may also illustrate his repeated effort in scrutinizing the great characters of literature. He presses closer each time; he insists relentlessly, an attitude which is indicated by the title of his critical essays, *Approximations*.

In his writings, Du Bos constantly gives new meanings and interpretations to the works of great masters. From an old truth he gains new insights which lead him on in his own spiritual progress. Or he comes across an old writing of his own, and suddenly discovers in his own written words new things which went far beyond his comprehension when he wrote them. Thus in the mystery of creative work, a man's future development is indicated. Du Bos is one of those men for whom writing is a "means and inducement to inner progress." Inner perfection is the last goal for Du Bos. Yet he once confessed that if he were not active creatively he would not feel alive. He likes to use the phrase, "le choc en retour." He "rebounces" by means of what his critical observation of others presents to him. His own spiritual progress is achieved only because he is stimulated by the understanding of a mental process in a great master, identifying himself with it or reacting against it. All observation of himself, all "introspection," takes place during an activity and bears on a mental activity.

HERE, I believe, is the nucleus of Charles Du Bos' individuality. He has a contemplative mind. Yet his meditation does not take place in the realm of the purely abstract, but life and spirit are commingled. He needs the activity of life as the material by which his meditation is set in motion and on which it can bear. In this sense he speaks of a "vital tone," of a "biological" necessity, and of a "complexe mi-animal mi-spirituel" of mental life. His interpretation of a phrase of Henri de Regnier, "living debases," is quite significant: "Living debases, in that sense that life does not leave us the time to live." He wishes to say that life does not leave us time to grasp and understand it through "la réflexion intime de nature créatrice." Only when it is permeated with meditation is life complete. The highest experience of life for him is offered in the fullness of maturity. Shakespeare's "Ripeness is all" is one of his favorite quotations. Du Bos once remarked that a man consciously possesses his soul only in his maturity, while in youth he thinks he does; and

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this idea betrays a rich personal experience of growth and inward enlightenment. It explains why a Vermeer, or the "Rustic Concert" of Giorgione, or Keats' "To Autumn" offered him his greatest artistic joys. Again and again, he uses the word "comble" indicating a fullness to the brim. Even in Watteau's nervous art he sees a "saturation." Emotions and passions are not Du Bos' way to happiness; rather calmness leads him there: his ideal, he says, is a "paix exaltée," the peace of the artistic works just mentioned which produce a complete harmony in his soul. The highest human condition in his eyes is absolute repletion and firmness without violence which like the music of Bach "climbs so to speak on the spot."

In the last analysis Du Bos is a man of sentiment; he is not an intellectual. "An idea for me never exists, so to speak, in its abstract form: it is a sensation unfolding into a feeling." His "heart," as he says, is present in any intellectual perception and guides him to understand more deeply, in a natural impulse of charity, the masters of art and thought whose work he approaches. And as he is fundamentally a moralist, "un être moral," the spiritual values in the works under scrutiny and, in the last analysis, their bearing on the spiritual fate of the observer himself, matter most to him. He is preoccupied by the question that St. Thomas asks, "Utrum homo debeat seipsum ex caritate diligere," "Is a man bound by charity to love himself?" While studying Benjamin Constant, he noticed that the danger of not loving their own soul threatened those who are introspectively sincere. For Du Bos, the observation and study of others only brings him back to himself. The earliest entries in his diary show how he comes back to re-examine himself with the increasing knowledge which the study of others gave him. Then with instruments thus forged (he loves medical terms for a psychological "experiment"), he again analyses other people in order to subject himself finally to the greatest possible moral scrutiny. His goal is perfection which he tries to reach by a spiritual progress through the help of the great "elders" whom he honors with profound reverence.

In his diary Du Bos recorded his introspections chiefly in those dark moments when the soul "contracts" itself. Then the remembrance of possible perfection, of spiritual exaltation, the clear light in which he now, being deprived of them, sees the spiritual possibilities of his new life, help him to persevere. "Let us assume that deep down in myself a Platonist, a partisan of reminiscence, constantly watches in order to counterbalance those moments when the Christian is not present." It seems to me that here Du Bos gives us the key to his inner life. Just before this sentence Du Bos addressed the following words to Gide: "You hold that perfection inheres in the very act of living, that it can result out of this act alone; I maintain that perfection exists before living, that it orients life and that it should model it." Du Bos several times

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employs the expression "modelage intérieur," which designates the inner work of the formation of one's self according to the "ideal model." This "ideal model" is nothing but the last reminder of possible greatness which a person has obtained in a state of grace. Du Bos' inner life consists of a series of innumerable approaches, "touches successives," toward his own perfection. A new progress in this respect is revealed to him in moments of exaltation which he then follows with his great ability of introspection. He continually meditates on what in his opinion is the essence of action—the creative, the exalted inner life. And furthermore, he weighs, he even questions the value of his exaltations. One can understand his courage and absolute sincerity with himself only when one observes that Du Bos repeatedly questions himself as to what extent a man may acquiesce to his inclinations ("pente") and in what measure he must think against himself "à contre-courant"), even contrary to his inspired self. What he experiences in an exaltation, he deepens and amplifies like the variations of a theme, and thus prepares himself for further progress. At the time of his conversion, he stated, "At every moment of my life I treated all the peripheral points as if they had been centers." Only at the age of forty-four, he wrote, was he beginning to concentrate on the real pivot of all things.

Before his conversion, Du Bos lacked an orderly perspective in his view of the world. This may be explained by the fact that his inner life represents his whole life. The world of objects has almost no power over him. The excerpts from his diary confirm this view. No external event, no journey, no landscape is described in it. Any page which Du Bos reads disturbs him only inwardly. He neither grasps nor conquers anything. He lives only with those things which belong to him; those things which, as it were, have become a part of him because he constantly "renews" them, "sufficiently reflects" on them, and continually reverts to them. His symbols are those of a man who has so meditated on the precious stones, the colors of a picture, or the sound of music that they are his own personal possessions—indeed a rare type of possession. Everything about him leaves the impression of exaltation and condensation; he takes the essence from some one else's thought and deepens it, "squares it" as he says: "The layer of human life which has always been the most important for me: the layer of depth." This is the starting point for Du Bos as a critic. It is quite difficult to determine whether the study of another individual is purely observation, or whether it is rather introspection on the part of the observer. As introspection it could reveal either accord or difference. It frequently happens that if we understand ourselves we also have the key to an understanding of others and vice versa. In the process of the analysis of another, we and the other person are combined to a certain extent. We ourselves are to a small degree a fixed individuality, and can be

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"moulded" by the picture of the one whom we study intensely. For the subjective man like Du Bos, we have here an outer layer of his inner life in which exist all the beloved minds with whom he communes. Because he starts his thinking in a refined world, he is able to penetrate deeper into the most profound secrets of the human soul.

ONE great European critic called Du Bos "anima naturaliter christiana." Du Bos' readers constantly want to compare him with the German critic Ernst Robert Curtius, the author of the essays on Balzac, on Marcel Proust, on French civilization and, more recently, of a fundamental study on the Latin literature of the Middle Ages. In one of his conversations with Gide, Du Bos violently claims that he does not want any "equilibrium," that he has no "Greek" component in his character. He is alien to the fusion of Greek and Christian elements of our civilization which Goethe for instance achieved in a classical balance. Du Bos is only Christian. Curtius has already compared him to Dante. Du Bos' spiritual courage resembles Dante's journey through Purgatory which constantly mounts with a sharp rise. For the classicist the world is horizontal; he is master of all that he surveys, and he surveys all. Du Bos demonstrated this when he applied to Curtius the phrase, "Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh!" In the Christian conception of the world the lines of life run vertically and their converging point lies in eternity. In this conception there is no "rest" but a constant participation in the things of man. On every page of Curtius an indescribable sense of spiritual well-being pervades the reader, and Curtius' gift for clarity makes all heights appear to be within easy reach. The reader is invited to belong to this world—only a small effort is required—and then all will be well and carefree for him. An ineffable liberation is promised. A page of Du Bos grips a man by those things which vitally concern him, and makes him conscious of the fact that he is a human being. He is dejected by his own imperfections and at the same time elevated to the highest reach of man. He is restless and cannot lose sight of the steep path ahead. He cannot read Du Bos as an observer only or in a passive state, for he is almost forced to apply Du Bos' words to his own life and moral enlightenment.

Du Bos sees on the steep pathway of the Christian only God, himself, and his fellow man, and he sees all the rest of the world in various stages of distortion. He thinks that the human mind does not possess the sovereignty to build its own structure or its own hierarchy in whose center it would dwell as if it were its own creation. To him intellect is not all-powerful, but he feels a lack which is due to the longing of the soul. Nothing human is sufficient in itself—so long as it is "inassisté." This is true not only in the religious sphere. "Left to ourselves without any help we are unable to produce unity

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and are but diversity and plurality." Du Bos knew this from his own experience. He tells us that since his conversion he has succeeded in reducing everything to an ordered unity. The lines of the moral system of the present-day world which he examined singly, converged for him, and this *vue d'ensemble* identified itself with a harmonious intellectual order.

A critic whose inner motives are of a moral nature is a psychologist. But Du Bos goes further than psychology. With uncommon insight he shows that the Christian moral life is a moral existence independent of all dogma. This is the keystone of his criticism. He never judges, for he wishes to describe only. The moral life of an individual is more important to him than the individual's accomplishment which would have to be evaluated, weighed, and judged according to some standard. Only the basic line of his subject, i.e., its autonomous individuality, interests him. In each case he penetrates to the very core of the man whom he studies. And the only standard of evaluation is the moral insight of the critic himself. In this manner he gives us a criticism which despises any previously established norms, even though these were set up by the critic himself. He accepts nothing as established but starts from the beginning each time. In order to obtain the whole truth he throws into the scale his own full weight which he revises anew with each observation. Du Bos finally reaches beyond individuality which he loves above all else. He uses the individual as an inducement to study a problem of moral life thoroughly and to "explain the problem by the example of the individual." For this reason he also uses "and" and "or" in his titles. These are supposed to indicate the basic lines of an individual, e.g., *Byron and the Need of Fatality* (English translation, 1932). Or they indicate, more frequently, the moral reality, the true, and the possible perfection which can be recognized in the individual, e.g., *Jacques Rivière et de la féconde humilité*.

Du Bos became ever more and more faithful to his resolution only to describe. He believed that if everything is described and understood, then, in the light of an exemplary life, the moral meaning would be incomparably clear. That is why he prefers letters or excerpts from diaries, for in these the biological individual is not dimmed at all, or not very much, by artistic efforts. He believes that an individual manifests himself unmistakably at any time, and this view allows him a free hand in interpreting a sentence or any part of a life. "How childish it is to wish that a man should have been different, instead of drawing from what he really was the maximum of substance he can offer us," he writes in the first entry in his diary. He is most interested in those moments when a person "cannot help" saying or doing something, when thus that person's deepest, "immutable" self is revealed. On the other hand, the question of "accepting," especially whether a man should acquiesce to his natural inclinations or whether he should oppose them, constantly occupies

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his mind. The following passage on Bremond approximates a self-description of Du Bos as a critic: "... being a psychologist, Bremond, in my opinion, differentiates and 'probes' human souls, their folds and mysteries, their endless complexities, with incomparably more exact and delicate shadings of judgment than Sainte-Beuve, whom he esteemed so highly. Lovingly he follows and describes all the contours, all the curves, all the coils of an individual, and he follows and describes them in this manner because it is his invincible conviction (which I share) that, when the individuality of God's creatures is at stake, a lack of respect for human truth means a lack of respect for God himself in the person of his creature."

Du Bos aims directly at the core, at the central event of a life. In consequence, when in the course of a study he later explains with more detail we often receive the impression that he says too much. He wants to illuminate the object from all sides and not to neglect any idea. He wants his studies to be a "summa" as his book on Gide is. All his articles are "projets de livres" which never became books. He never wrote a complete study on Keats or Walter Pater, who were dear to him. Following his conversion he concentrated on the great Catholic writers of his native land. He studied the great figures of modern Catholicism in France—Baudelaire, Claudel, and Mauriac—after he had honored most of the great contemporaries and the persons of the nineteenth century closely akin to himself. His "aperçus" on Goethe show how much there is still left for psychological criticism to accomplish.

IN HIS criticism Du Bos did not seek man's intellectual stature but only his moral essence. To him it seemed futile to group people and the idea of a spirit of the age was nonsense in his opinion. He could not, of course, free himself from the prevailing intellectual attitudes of his age. His tool is literary criticism, as it is one, in many cases the most important, element in the formation of many of his great contemporaries. His method is "sincerity," which he himself recognizes as one of the virtues, almost obsessions, of his age. And the psychological act in which he is most interested and which appears to him most fruitful, is "exaltation," just as it constitutes the core of the work of Rilke, of Charles Morgan, or of Gottfried Benn. Thus the most important of the spiritual and intellectual preoccupations of his age are also his preoccupations. But there is a fundamental difference between Du Bos and his contemporaries. For some of the great writers of our time, when they discover one of the impulses which seem new and especially keen in this age, their discovery takes on an exclusive value for them. This situation can be observed very clearly in regard to poetic exaltation. Rilke builds his whole philosophy around the longing for exaltation; for Charles Morgan, and others,

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exaltation is revered as a godlike force—not as in a truly pagan system like one god among others, but, in a sort of pagan monotheism, as the only god. Du Bos is overwhelmed by the same experiences as they are. But, while living keenly in the forms of experience of his age, he is humble before the accumulated wisdom of past generations: he does not, building on what he himself experienced, discover wonderful new speculations. He rather uses his own exaltations to understand what the great masters have meant. His way of formation is one of "finding." In the art and wisdom of the heritage he finds the hidden and neglected truth. One day he "found" that he was a Catholic.

He is thus, although not a humanist in the strict sense, since the Greek and Latin culture did not mean much to him, one of the important humanistic teachers of our age, who professes the inexhaustible wealth of tradition. He shows us in the writings of past times our own most personal concerns. His criticism does not serve for a historical demonstration of an intellectual or aesthetic nature. It is, therefore, not passing as all such literary criticism is with the advance of knowledge or the change of underlying theories. Rather, his criticism of literature serves as an instrument to create lasting spiritual values, insights that are always new. The knowledge and analysis of the works of others, of art and literature, serves only as a tool, for Du Bos, and for his reader, to perfect himself, to lead a better life. And what is more, he convinces us that we cannot progress on the road to perfection without ever and ever again returning to the riches of wisdom which tradition keeps in store for us. One can open his books at any place—the advantage of a diary—and at any moment, and will always find a sentence, one by Du Bos himself or one that he quotes, that stirs us and will go on occupying us. He teaches us attention to the real meaning, to the sanctity of inspired writing. He awakens in us the courage to accept that which moves us in a written passage, in a painting, in a piece of music, to take it as true, and to make the most of it for our own self. He shows us literature and art as a means to know ourselves, and through the knowledge of ourselves to try to perfect ourselves. Such an appeal to the reader, that is to apply to his own life the emotion which he receives, is really the appeal which is reserved to great art.

Elizabeth Langgässer

BY CURT HOHOFF

Suddenly and unexpectedly Elizabeth Langgässer died last year at the age of fifty-one. Her life and her work as a literary artist are closely connected with her home in the Rhenish Palatinate. She was born in Alzay, educated in Darmstadt, Mainz and Worms, and died in Rheinzabern. The characters indelibly delineated in her great novel belong to this region. The cities in her stories lie within its bounds and the aspects of nature which enchanted and inspired her with deep lyric sentiment are unmistakably West German, Rhenish, with the vegetation of an old cultivated land—a land, stony and hilly, where the vine grows, and where the rose and the lilac shed their kindred fragrance. This time in her home, to which she always remained attached, was interrupted by a sojourn of a decade and a half in Berlin. Elizabeth Langgässer had become a teacher, had married, and 1928 moved with her family to Berlin. Only after the war did she return to her home.

Now here in Berlin the intellectual process of which the volume of lyrics entitled *Der Wendekreis des Lames* first gave testimony must have been extraordinarily accelerated. As the title itself indicates, cosmic and Christian doctrines of salvation, united in a strangely fascinating combination, permeate, illuminate, deepen or darken each other. With this work the keynote was given to the subject that occupied the author throughout her life. Jakob Hagner accepted the book for publication and thereby at once ushered her into the salon of German literature. In 1935 appeared the *Tierkreisgedichte*, which in those days was recognized as the most important contribution to lyric poetry in Germany. But as early as 1936 the half-Jewess was expelled from the literature chamber of the Reich, and thus all further publication was made impossible. With that began a series of economic difficulties and mental anxieties, from which the novelist never fully recovered. For instance, the eldest daughter of the family seemed to have vanished in Auschwitz and was not found again until 1946.

Such disheartening experiences explain the mighty moral and poetic pathos with which Elizabeth Langgässer appeared before the German public after the war, particularly in her novel *Das unauslöschliche Siegel* (1946) and in the following year in a volume of poetry, *Der Laubmann und die Rose*. Her public soon included all Europe. This became clear when she was invited to give addresses at gatherings and congresses both at home and abroad. As early as 1932 appeared the *Triptychon des Teufels, ein Buch von dem Hass, den Börsenspiel und der Unzucht*. The unusual title covers a world which has its parallels in the modern age. She says,

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As a child I became familiar with the world of legend, as a grown person I experienced the historical reality of the French occupation of my homeland, while teaching and being taught by the country and its people; laborers, peasants, gardeners of the moorland legend seemed to become a reality and reality to manifest itself as a parable. Mars is still called the demon of war and discord; Mercury became the demon of inflation, and Venus the goddess of venal love in the retinue of Mars. Thus originated the Triptychon des Teufels.

In the childhood story, *Proserpina* (1934) the onset of the outer world is presented wholly in mythical parallels. In *Im Gang durch das Ried* the author describes with forthright and nervously impassioned distinctness the world of men and women of her home. Here a *trauma* came to light, a gross outrage of the soul through the psychological analysis of what ought not be divulged, in the words of Dante, "of what one does not speak." Elizabeth Langgässer spoke about it, and the fact that she did so was taken amiss in many circles. At times she was even threatened by the Roman Index. But here the spheres touch. The contents of *Das unauslöschliche Siegel*, the chief work, which is soon to be followed by the *Märkische Argonautenfabrt*, is the story of a German Jew who was converted to Christianity. The action of the novel falls in the years before and after the first World War, but its deeper design embraces the last century from 1851 to the present time. It represents an enlarged triptych of the devil, enlarged by the experiences which a Jew must have had during the past decades, as also by a really panoramic view of history, ranging from Lourdes to the Soviet East—with the first World War and the then strained relations between France and Germany as the political *leitmotif*. So a political novel? A sociological one? Not at all. The broad and deep texture of the story is nurtured by metaphysical roots which on the one hand reach into the mother-soil of Christianity, on the other into that of legend, myth, cosmology and the psychology of consciousness.

The novel professes to be a Christian epos which plays between heaven and hell. In the development of the action the hero, though baptized, is not released by the baptismal waters from the fetters that bind him as a citizen of the world. He is still entangled in the earthly things and falls a victim to the demon of sex. Nor is he alone. The entire small-town society of the Rhenish world is at the point of settling down smugly and disastrously in the enjoyment of prosperity and political order, in gossip, and in a not elemental, but yet corroding corruption, such as a materially secure life entails, while those who are corrupted are not fully aware of their condition. The kingdom of Satan extends deeply into the lives of religious people, the clergy and the convents. It also reaches far into the sphere of politics and politicians.

But the seal, it must be remembered, is indelible. Baptism is an objectively efficacious sacrament. Then at the end we see the Jew Belfontaine, freed from

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the concentration camp, wandering like a holy beggar along the road from Potsdam to Wittenberg, a road with many symbolic names.

This novel has its weaknesses. The project was far-reaching and its successful completion would require a power which in our day can no longer be found in a Christian writer, for the simple reason that the world is no longer Christian. Still, here the attempt was made for the first time to advance beyond the field of religious and devotional literature to the theological novel. Christian literature concerns itself in general with practical piety. That is its boundary and it may not ascend higher. Elizabeth Langgässer was unwilling to remain within this secure realm. She included in her cosmos what has largely slipped away from Christianity, namely, the modern theory of the state, science, sex, myth and legend. It was her aim to weld together again a shattered and divided world without having to sacrifice anything essential. For this even those ought to be grateful who are of the opinion that the writer should have left certain taboos untouched.

What affects one as a dissonance in the novels, and what could not be removed because of the comprehensive nature of the undertaking, is found as an integrated whole, free from any conflicting elements, in the poems. Here lies the unalloyed metal, and there is here also the ageless character of spiritual thought. There are not many poems, a hundred at the most, in which the voice of Sappho and Droste is still heard, heard in those bittersweet strains, subdued and attuned to greater depths than usual, to the force of nature, to the world of vegetation, to the birds and the breezes. To her the natural world is instinct with life, peopled with the figures of ancient mythology, classical and Teutonic, by Orpheus, Psyche, Demeter and the wild huntsman, Rumpelstilz, Klingsor and Yggdrasil. Literature too lives on here, notably in "Eurydike," "Die Haimonskinder," "Avalun"—an echo of romanticism, a profound study of the magic which she took over from her teacher and revered friend, Wilhelm Lehmann. Loerke also, as is well known, is familiar with these tones. But something is added to this god Pan, the god of the forests, which increases the magic of nature. There is something behind this whole world of fiction, trembling, most always silent,—a presentiment, a cry of anguish, for also the creature is groaning and calling for redemption. Just as grace reaches to man a helping hand from above, so also the kingdom of nature is not built up by itself. The symbols of the rose and the lily prefigure, as it were, within the realm of nature itself—thanks to its symbolic-Biblical relation—the liberation of its magic secrets through a name, through the enchantment of a call. For a poem, sound and rhythm, sense and metaphor are the means of "salvation," because they exhibit the world as a whole. This "salvation" possesses a transcendental aspect also in the vegetable kingdom:

(Continued on page 170)

Aspects of Georges Duhamel

BY JEAN TENANT

LET us approach the work of Georges Duhamel as visitors, limiting ourselves by contemplating it under a few of its aspects. We shall enter it by way of a garden. Georges Duhamel is proud of his garden: he composed his beautiful Fables here and spoke here with the tall evening shadows. Those shadows haunt the garden at Valmondois, where during two years a book of small volume but of great density was created—*Le Bestiaire et l'Herbier*; here is the shadow of an Erasmus, of a Montaigne, a Cervantes, a La Fontaine. This doctor, this scientist, this philosopher lived in the society of these wise men, every one a hero, and he transmitted their lessons to us by adapting them to our way of understanding, which the temptations and the prestige of material progress trouble too often. The *Fables de mon Jardin* appeared in 1936. It is not impossible that posterity will be pleased to place them in the first rank, as the flowering and supreme lesson of so many books.

In truth, we see in the garden of Georges Duhamel all the love and desires, all the virtues and vices spread over a vast world, all the conflicts, all the wars. Upon entering we see the gardener at his task, under a threatening sky, indifferent to the menacing elements. Everything could fall to ruin at any moment; quite peacefully he waters his dry plants. For a good gardener knows well that the task of man is not that of the gods, that it is a task limited in time and in space; and he does his job as one who has known always that there is a great amount of conceit in the "Cui bono?" of the pessimist, even more pride than there is cowardice in any act of despair.

Thick clouds gather . . . In the distance the earth groans as if seized with dread. The storm is coming seeking passage. Perhaps it will pass us by, and spare us. Perhaps it will press upon us its aquatic-monster paws. In a few moments probably our suffocating fields will moan under its deluge.

However, the gardener, a heavy watering can in his hand, is pouring a temperate shower on his still peaceful garden.

As if all hope were permitted nevertheless. As if all thirst could be appeased in joy. As if the smallest flower would live eternally in confidence and in happiness.

Although these fables are in prose, they are quite poetical and of a lightness which gives wings to reason. "Le gouvernement d'un jardin" tells us that in a garden we should approach as closely as possible to nature; not in order to imitate her as other "fabulists" propose, but to study her, to regulate and govern her.

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If all doors closed and the garden suddenly found itself alone, in the middle of the best season, it would grow two or three days obediently. Two or three days, no longer.

Here the author states his arguments and proofs to show what would happen to a garden left to the caprice and furies of a nature entirely free. After the description of disorder and anarchy, "this regime," adds the Fabulist, "would not eternally endure." No, for the forest "seeing the garden fallen under the power of the terrorist, would begin to act. It would sweep away the agitators, and rebels, these one-season masters." Then one day, "the garden would disappear into the murmuring darkness of the towering wilderness of the full-grown forest. And our world would be again as it was in its obscure beginning."

However, if "everything in the life of a garden proclaims the excellence of the principle of authority," then all things demonstrate that "this principle alone is not enough to direct the universe." That is why "the good gardener tempers at every moment the principle of authority by the principle of persuasion."

Here we have the first notions of a natural politic. Considered in the more elevated sense, the author of this fable has a "politic," whose rules harmonize rather well with those of a certain prince strongly decided, and decreed for a small monetary devaluation which gave him the unmerited name of counterfeiter—we called the king "Philippe le Bel," the man who said: "We who wish always to preserve right."

THERE are two war novels (which are so well known that we will not examine them), *Vie des Martyrs* and *Civilisation*, which revealed Georges Duhamel to humanity; but it was the war, in which he was an ambulance doctor, that revealed humanity to him. Before these horrors, such an intellect could not confine itself by a vain revolt, much less abandon itself to pessimism, which is the most common and unreasonable form of despair. Knowledge of man dispels both optimism and contempt with equal prudence. Man, neither angel nor beast, made of the clay of the earth, but animated by the divine breath, ought to be both warned against himself and comforted by the incessant recalling of his greatness. We shall certainly see that Georges Duhamel was always concerned about not hiding from us any of our misery; we shall see him equally thoughtful of our dignity.

After *Vie des Martyrs* and *Civilisation*, Georges Duhamel published *La Possession du Monde*. Here also, we are able to capture the profound thought of the writer. This work is a sort of lay gospel (as the author is no longer a believer) and in a certain sense, the book is religious. He has discovered that happiness is the end of humanity; he has not entirely forgotten that this truth is taught to us as early as our first Catechism, but he has re-examined it, and

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he has undertaken the task of making it easier for man to seek this happiness. For this, he proposed to us nothing less than "possession" of the world, understanding the word possession in the sense of knowing. A critic could say to him that the best of his religion has been included in the Gospel, and that his ethic, so desirable and pure, although laic, runs the risk of having for followers and initiates only elite individuals, "intellectuals." He would certainly answer that he had tried to give hope to those men deprived of faith, to beat a way for them.

A certain excess of sensibility found in him its counter-balance, its corrective, in the disciplines of an aesthetic refinement. If at times we believe that there is something lacking in his experience of men, we will quickly perceive that he has minutely weighed their weakness. We can see in *Le Prince Jaffar*, which preceded *La Possession du Monde*, a settler named Philip who expresses himself in quite a Voltairian way when he says:

You will learn once more that the leaders of ordinary people must govern with God, the Devil, the saints and the clergy. When a beast has been stolen from me or one of my machines has been broken, and the author of this misdeed is late in begging my mercy, I summon all the men upon whom the least suspicion could fall. I lead them before the high priest and ask them to prove their innocence by swearing. A marvelous method. He who hesitates to swear denounces himself in spite of all. I punish him.

We can see by this that the innocence of the common man, in whom Rousseau admired a certain simple naturalness not corrupted by civilization, needs to be *encouraged*, let us say, with timely constraint. In the case of "more advanced people," God, the Devil and the high-priest are replaced by the policeman! Nevertheless, Georges Duhamel says that "man has in common some simple riches, in spite of different languages, laws, customs and shades of skin." Yet we know that this asset is forever menaced, that it tends to diminish if it does not renew itself and fructify. And what defense can a man, armed only with his own enlightenment and single forces, make against an enemy "who never sleeps," as the author of *L'Imitation* declares? What matters! Our moralist will reveal these "simple riches" in the most ordinary of men, those most helpless before themselves; in a Salavin, for example, in all those who fight to "save their souls" (Duhamel gives a sense purely human and temporal to this expression), in the tidal wave which shakes institutions, upsets neat frames, and breaks up organizations. We shall see further on, in the story of *Pasquier*, that the most solid of these groups, because it is the most natural—the Family—offers to the individual but a fragile shelter, if one neglects to cultivate there the common good of all its members, and all people, this joint asset for which each of us must account before humanity, or more important, to use Christian terms, before God.

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The names of *Pasquier* and *Salavin* will remain, I think, in the history of literature and the French novel. We will not undertake here to distinguish the diverse forms of the novel, nor seek, like so many others, what is the importance of the *character* in literary creation. Georges Duhamel told us one day that the novelists had more important things to do than invent individuals for novels; that it was better to observe the growth of characters, to preside at their development. This is perhaps a debatable point. What is certain is that in the writings of Georges Duhamel the novel develops after the fashion of the style of the French novel, which, as Albert Thibaudet said, seems to have evolved from the epic. "The novel retains in our culture," wrote Thibaudet, "the place of the epic poem in the civilization of others."

Let us speak first of *Salavin*. In the first two volumes, *Salavin* is presented to us as a rather poor man, a weak being, not completely unaware at times of certain insights. He delivers himself to self-examination with a rare mastery. In the third volume, we find him again after many exaltations a candidate for sainthood. He weighs himself exactly and finds nothing in himself which merits either approbation or reprobation. The first elements of the elevation of which he wishes to be both artisan and subject are wanting in him. He resigns himself to "start at zero." Thus he discovers the art that all saints have practiced—that of using their faults for the good of their soul. At first he gives up petty pleasures, then ascertains that his merit is small. Shall he seek to give joy to those near him? He finds himself quite destitute. He tries voluntary suffering, and he sees that others suffer around him because of his experience. He perceives that chastity is indispensable to his new state, and leaves home to live in a furnished room. Here he meditates day and night, but realizes that he advances little. Twice he tries to go to confession; the lightness of the penance which the priests inflict scandalizes him. One day, he finds one who listens to him for a long time and encourages him to come back again. *Salavin* is moved; he has seen a saint! What does it matter if he, *Salavin*, is not a saint, *provided that there be saints in the world!* Thus he goes from Jansenism to Quietism without even suspecting.

Later (*Le Club des Lyonnais*) he makes new experiments, just as unhappy as the preceding ones. He renounces sainthood, but thinks always about the salvation of his soul. What should he do? No more radical actions! No, he shall be only a man, a simple and good man. He will undertake his own reformation. For that solitude is necessary. Shall he retreat within a monastery? No! *Salavin* is not one of those who would be satisfied by these proven means. He wishes to draw all from his own being. He is a victim of the "proper means." Then, he gets a false passport and leaves his country.

In Tunis he rents a small shop as agent of a phonograph company. He hires a young employer whose morals leave something to be desired. *Salavin's*

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efforts to correct them fail. Salavin enters a clinic as a nurse's aid. His devotion is admired. Then he disappears. We learn that he has offered himself in another place as a guard of the plague-stricken. Another time he gives his blood at the hospital for a rogue wounded in a skirmish. He refuses praise insisting that he gave himself in order to regain his self-esteem. Why does he not find happiness? He doesn't know. Perhaps we know: in the good that we do for the love of man, a scrupulous soul will always find some small bit of egoism. He will have his recompense, however. Gravely wounded from a gun shot by one of his protégés, Salavin is brought home. At last his true name and address are found out. His wife, informed of his state, comes to his side and they sail together. At Marseille, his leg must be amputated. Still very sick, Salavin and his wife take the train to return to Paris. Arriving in the lodgings which he had left to "exalt the world and conquer himself," Salavin has himself laid on his old couch, "If I had to begin again in another life," he says, "it seems to me that I would know." And he dies, having at last conquered his torments.

Salavin was more than a brother for Georges Duhamel; he was a mysterious lodger in his heart—that one which each of us carries in himself, witness and confidant of our most secret thoughts and our struggles of conscience. Salavin believes too, that he "possessed the world" and could embrace only misery. Death consoled him for the failure that was his life. We can believe at least that he saved his soul.

La Chronique des Pasquier is a work in which the *Romanesque* often gives place to what Georges Duhamel calls "imaginary memories." We are not interested here in discovering to what extent the memories of Laurent Pasquier, his hero, are those of the author. We are more concerned with the human value of these beautiful works. One hardly knows how to summarize them.

The children of Raymond Pasquier, participants in the intimate drama which takes place before their eyes, each suffer in a different manner from the torrents and the misconduct of their father. Each one comes home, sits down, eats, talks and sleeps, then goes off without leaving anything of himself. As for the mother, physically the weakest, in reality the strongest, she never ceases to reproach, to hold together, to unite. This family is a small society which has no leader, or—what comes to the same thing—has a leader who is lacking in good sense and dignity. Because the father's authority is null, a double feeling replaces it and becomes the law, the mother's love for her children and the love of the children for their mother. Here we have "rule of the heart." Finally, these pictures of contemporary history reunite, after a detour, in the *Possession du Monde*.

Several episodes of this *roman-fleuve* can be detached from the *Chronique des Pasquier*. Without being considered in the sense of an appetizer, they

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could easily be connected to the *Memories* series, if they were not fictitious. I would like chiefly to speak of *Désert de Bièvres* and of *Maitres*. In the first, the author recalls companions who made up the group of the Abbey (under borrowed names). In a way these are the memories of the years of intellectual and social apprenticeship. The second is the tale of an atrocious and inexpiable conflict between two scientists. Here, Laurent Pasquier, or rather Georges Duhamel, draws from the imagined events which he tells a new lesson of individualism; for we see in these very tales a condemnation of this same individualism, fundamentally destructive. Bitter and useful lesson, from a man who, despite the natural desires of his heart, in spite of the tendency of his spirit towards optimism, does not wish to deceive or confuse us. In these writings we see that science, intelligence and material progress are of a high order, but that civilization, humanism and charity are of another order, incomparably higher. That is why despite all the disagreements that come to light between his thought and that of some among us upon closer examination of his work, the honest man feels himself perfectly confident in the company of this virtuous man. He speaks of those things which ennoble man, but also of those which weigh upon him, shackle and pull him down.

Although there is less unity in the *Chronique des Pasquier* than in *Vie et Aventures de Salavin*, the work is of an extraordinary richness, with its abounding episodes and highly suggestive power.

THE book which has done the most for the reputation of Georges Duhamel, after *Vie des Martyrs*, is assuredly that one which is called *Scènes de la Vie future*, written upon his return from a trip in America. It caused much controversy in its day. The author had set forth his intention very clearly. "I am aiming at American civilization, not the American people, among whom I have many excellent friends and who can present to history many figures of famous masters." Individualism (in the special sense that Duhamel gives to this word) has been stunned by the mechanization of life in America. Far from dazzling him, the researches of this country in the industrial and social order, the means of an unheard-of efficiency put to the service of man's devices, shocked the sense of measure that our moralist had inherited from his French upbringing. One of the most impressive chapters of the book is "Royaume de la Mort"; what he is speaking of is slaughter houses and the canning factories of Chicago. Besides, he had been deeply struck by certain customs, certain prejudices, certain ostracisms which really are disappearing. While in the country of "standardized" life he trembled before the possibility of a universal and detrimental leveling of such ideas and methods as condition and develop the "personality," on the other side of the ocean, in particular within Gallo-Roman countries of our philosophers, our poets, our artists, even our scientists and artisans. Perhaps after examination it will be necessary to "reconsider" the problem. It can be

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that, at the end of their experiments, these great realists who direct American industry will succeed in liberating man from the machine by perfecting the latter and intellectualizing more and more the human effort.

GEORGES DUHAMEL, moralist, developed in a number of rather important works (*Entretiens dans le Tumulte*, *Lettres au Patagon*, *Les Sept dernières Plaies*, *Les Confessions sans pénitence*, *Discours aux Nuages*, etc.) the fruit of his research and studies. We believe that we have traced the main lines of his philosophy, more tolerantly forgiving towards man than optimistic, more positive than traditional, essentially religious although pragmatic, but without that religiosity with which romanticism has so long adulterated the sense of the divine. Briefly, Georges Duhamel, even in his memoirs, which continue to appear under the title of *Lumières sur ma vie*, leads the long fight for the defense of the spiritual and of civilization.

In *L'Humaniste et l'Automate*, published in 1933, which announced the courageous *Défense des Lettres* and the "Crusade for the Book," he raised the barrier of Humanism against the dangers of mechanization:

It is well [he said] that the name of humanities, or '*lettres humaines*,' has been given to the patient study of a certain number of knowledges which seem unsusceptible to immediate practical application and which are, more than science, consecrated to wisdom.

I think that a long study in humanism, and assiduous and prolonged frequentation of great minds, a generous application to all sorts of gratuitous notions, is for the 20th century man the only chance to allay successfully the frenzy of an excessive mechanization. The fight henceforth is between the humanist and the automaton.

It seems that we could develop infinitely this proposition: *The fight henceforth is between the humanist and the automaton*, and that in so doing we would be led to examine all the problems which are raised in our times, under their multiple aspects, and which entreat our wisdom and our good will.

We should say that the writings of Georges Duhamel furnish a direct and explicit support for the effort towards a Catholic renaissance which is taking place all over the world in spite of or primarily because of the increasing obstinacy of the forces of evil. Yet these works should be judged primarily upon their own merit as literature and it would be unfair not to admire them as such. Moreover his writing bears eloquent witness, in its entirety, to the greatness of a writer ordinarily respectful of religious things and to the ardour with which it sets itself to defend the spiritual values and the most trustworthy acquisitions of civilization. It is true that this is on a purely human level. Yet this work is capable of awakening in men of good will a desire to "go beyond," to lift themselves up to a superior reality, to the Eternal Truth. Thus not only is it literally beautiful, but ought we not to hold it as munificent and, as such, honor it and love it?

Transl. by Joseph Heintz

Paris Letter

PEREGRINATIO PARISIENSIS

IT IS good to learn that Peregrinus is coming to Paris. I shall be glad to be useful to him in any way I can in introducing him to some of the living sectors of contemporary French Catholicism, in drawing up a preliminary guide to the major landmarks, and then I shall leave him alone to make personal explorations and evaluations.

I have no illusions about being able to prepare a capsule containing the major elements of Catholic thought in Paris in this late autumn of 1951. For you know how distasteful the capsule in any form—whether ideological or gastronomical, especially gastronomical!—is to me. Thought can never be wholly abstract. It must always be attached carnally to persons and to places, and it seems to me necessary to get acquainted with the people and sit around the places before getting the full flavor of ideas.

So, much more than a neat and systematic list of themes, this itinerary will contain all sorts of random, personal, perhaps frivolous items that strike me as forming a part of the contemporary French Catholic landscape: The Victorian "sitting room" in Ann and Julien Green's apartment on the rue de Varenne . . . Jacques Maritain at "Eau Vive," the Dominican *université libre* at Soisy sur Seine where he teaches summers surrounded by friends and disciples from all over the world—North and South Americans, Syrians, Indo-Chinese, Senegalese; since the war Maritain has become an outstanding international figure who has perhaps more impact abroad than in France. "Nul n'est prophète!" But "Eau Vive" is one of the most exciting spiritual experiments that I know, and Peregrinus would do well to take the bus out to Soisy one Sunday and have a look at it . . . Lively meetings of the group of "Catholic Intellectuals" in the cloister of the Gothic church of Saint-Severin in the Latin Quarter, where discussion ranges from the theological aspects of films such as "Dieu a besoin des hommes" to the Christian conception of history and the implications of psychological and surgical interventions in the treatment of mental disorders . . . Glimpses of bare little rooms in sad houses in Montreuil or Montrouge in other of Red suburbs of Paris, where worker-priests (*prêtres-ouvriers*) say Mass at the conclusion of their day's work for a congregation of laboring men in *bleu de travail* . . . Gabriel Marcel's book-lined study on the rue de Tournon, an *haut-lieu* of Christian Existentialism . . . The sessions of the "Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques" which annually bring together the most distinguished figures, both lay and clerical, of French Catholicism, in the crypt of the church of Sainte Odile, for a week of discussion of some outstanding contemporary problem . . . Mass in the quiet chapels of the many

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hospitable monasteries of Paris—such as the Dominicans on the rue de la Glacière or the Benedictines of the rue de la Source . . . Mass, if Peregrinus cares to wander a little farther afield one Sunday, in one of the monastic chapels of the surrounding Ile-de-France, such as the Dominican house of Le Saulchoir at Etiolles (very near "Eau Vive"—he might combine a visit to the two), or the chapel of the Benedictine nuns at Jouarre, near a church distinguished by one of the few surviving Carolingian crypts in France . . . The intellectual excitement of encounters at the Jesuits of the rue Monsieur, where the excellent monthly *Etudes* is edited by Father D'Ouince and a brilliant group that includes Father Jean Daniélou and Father Raymond Jouve . . . The apartment of Mme. Maryse Choisy, next door, where the gifted and versatile editor of *Psyché*, through her writings and wide personal influence, is currently working towards a synthesis of *Catholicisme et Psychoanalyse* (the title of one of her latest books). Her Saturday evenings bring together persons as widely different as Jean Paulhan, director at Gallimard and *Eminence Grise* of modern French letters, and the R.P. Teilhard de Chardin, whose researches on pre-historic man and evolutionary theories have aroused passionate debate . . . The Dominican house at 29 Boulevard de Latour-Maubourg, that hive of intellectual activity, one of the intellectual cross-roads of Paris, where the sympathetic Father Maydiou, abetted by the Fathers Dominique Dubarle (whose articles on cybernetics are well worth attention), Serrand, and Chartier, edit *La Vie intellectuelle*, one of the leading French monthlies.

Over on the other side of the river, on the *Rive droite*, on the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré in the neighborhood of *antiquaires, maisons de couture*, and art galleries, another group of Dominicans, "those of 222" have applied themselves to the neglected task of re-establishing contact between the Church and the arts. They have had notable success. Their activity has provoked controversy, but no one can deny their energy, their courage, and their vitality. One of their number, Father Couturier, is well known in America. Intimate friend of all the great living French painters, artist of no mean ability himself, Father Couturier has been a motive force behind the creation of the striking modern churches at Assy, at Audincourt (near Belfort), and of the Dominican chapel at Vence, on the Côte d'Azur. The first of these to be completed, Assy, in the French Alps, is embellished with mosaics by Léger, windows by Rouault, diverse contributions by such figures as Matisse and Chagall and Lurcat, and constitutes a veritable museum of modern art. Whether this is genuinely "religious art" or not is a matter of discussion still, since the Christ of Assy (by Germain Richier) was recently removed from the church on official demand, as a possible source of scandal. Peregrinus may follow developments in this exciting field through the review *Art Sacré*, one of the many publications of the Dominican "Editions du Cerf." In addition,

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he might read the excellent study of the entire question by Father Regamey, "La Querelle de l'Art sacré" (*La Vie intellectuelle*, Nov., 1951, pp. 3-48).

Another member of the community at "222," Father Carré has worked for years with theater people. He has succeeded in infusing a Christian spirit among many avant-garde elements of the French stage. And his colleague, Father Weber, has the distinction of being the chaplain of *les petits rats* of the Paris Opéra, who make their first communion at 222 rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. These versatile Dominicans have by no means limited themselves to the pulpit in spreading the word of God. They are deeply and efficiently involved in movies, radio, and television as means of re-Christianizing the masses. They edit a big-circulation weekly, *Cinéma, Radio, Télévision* and one of them, Father Pichard, has established himself as a leading European authority on television.

As you can see, much is happening. Peregrinus will immediately be conscious of the intellectual eagerness, the diversity of effort, the free and fruitful exchange of ideas between the clergy (who do not feel they have a monopoly on philosophical thought) and the interested layman, whether Catholic or not. He will be pleased by the welcome extended by clergy and layman alike, their willingness to discuss a wide range of problems, the interest shown by the intellectual minority in the development of American Catholicism (of which, however, only a handful have anything resembling a real conception). A number of excellent studies on Catholicism in the United States are appearing. Father Jean Daniélou, in a brief piece in *Esprit* (Nov., 1950, pp. 689-693), titled "Living Trends in American Catholicism," notes: "Nous pouvons dire seulement que la vitalité, l'inquiétude, l'esprit de l'invention du jeune catholicisme américain nous font bien augurer de l'un et l'autre point." (The points being: will American Catholics achieve a real influence in their society? If so, what sort of influence will it be?) Father Raymond Jouve, of the Jesuits of the rue Monsieur, who has spent some time in the United States, set down his impressions in a solid series of articles in *Etudes*, which conclude enthusiastically: "These notes give sufficient indication of the incredible vitality of the Church in America, as well as of the diversity of its efforts. The Ancient Church of Rome has come in contact with the dynamism of a youthful America, and a new blood is pulsing through its veins. To find the European equivalent of this expansion of the Christian life, one would have to go back to the Middle Ages. . ."

But most observers are not so optimistic about the American Church nor about the world in general. There is a deep tragic current, a sense of "the end of a world" which runs somberly through contemporary French and European thought and which cannot easily be harmonized with the predominantly optimistic and positive tone of American religiosity.

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Peregrinus must be prepared to find, especially in Paris intellectual circles, a brooding sense of the Apocalypse, of a culture menaced by two conflicting colossi, Russia and America. Father Maydiou, editor-in-chief of *La Vie intellectuelle*, in a thoughtful and moving article, "Have Christians Nothing to Say?" (Oct. 1950, pp. 260-275), writes:

Or, je prête attention à l'inquiétude que je sens autour de moi, je vois à sa source une menace qui, pour n'avoir pas été inconnue aux siècles passés, a pris en notre temps une ampleur démesurée: la menace de la mort. Après deux guerres mondiales, ce siècle s'englue déjà en une troisième, qui n'assure d'être la dernière que dans la mesure où elle promet d'être totalement destructrice. La mort se présente maintenant comme universelle. La mort de l'individu, j'y étais depuis longtemps habitué . . . Mais depuis vingt ans, j'ai appris que la mort peut venir sans que j'aie accompli mon destin sur cette terre. Non seulement je suis appelé à mourir, mais ceux auxquels je devrais transmettre mon héritage sont menacés de mourir avant moi; le monde dans lequel je vis, la civilisation que j'aurais aimé perfectionner et enrichir sont eux-mêmes menacés de mort, et d'une mort totale. . . .

This atmosphere of dread, of metaphysical anguish, especially when it is accompanied by social and economic disintegration, is scarcely one which is favorable to literary and artistic expression.

For Peregrinus must not expect to find a flourishing post-war Catholic literary movement, studded with a new Bloy, a new Péguy, a new Bernanos. Of course, Claudel is still alive, but he definitely belongs to a pre-war (even pre-World War I) generation, to the trinity Valéry, Gide, Claudel, of which he is the only surviving member. His place as a great (but always *discutable*) literary figure, is established without doubt, but he is now a monument and not a living force. François Mauriac remains productive, but rather gives the impression of a survivor of a stable, bourgeois past, astray in the violent *univers concentrationnaire* of the present. His editorials in *Le Figaro*, fine as they are, fail to strike any deeply responsive note among younger readers. Bernanos, though dead, is more contemporary, more of a "prophet" for the young, if prophets there be in this rudderless time.

As a matter of fact, from the purely literary point of view, with the exception of a very few notable names like Julien Green, who steadily increases in stature with the years, and Henry de Montherlant, who alternates eternally between a harsh, theatrical Spanish religiosity (to me, barely Catholic) and a studied, artistically impeccable paganism, Peregrinus will have slim picking. Naturally, the literary reviews launch a "great new Catholic novelist" several times each year, but this is trade publicity, and Peregrinus will not be taken in by it.

The so-called Catholic literary renaissance, an historical phenomenon with its roots in the period before the first World War, its flowering *entre les deux*

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guerres, no longer has real contemporary substance, although we are inclined to make much, rather too much, of it in American Catholic literary circles. As Mauriac writes in a *Figaro* article, "Les dernières colonnes de l'Eglise:" "Personne aujourd'hui ne pourrait publier, comme il y a trente ans, un livre intitulé 'Les Témoins du renouveau catholique.' Non que ce renouveau ait cessé; le vieil arbre ne finira amais chez nous de reverdir; mais ce reverdissement ne se manifeste plus, ne s'exprime plus dans les lettres. . . ." The work of Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Thomas Merton, Robert Lowell, is probably more important than the current French production. (The tremendous vogue of Graham Greene in translation, the tremendous amount of serious commentary devoted to him—two full length books, including one by the well-known Catholic critic, Jacques Madaule, plus any number of articles—is eloquent testimony of this.) If prodded, however, I might recommend to Peregrinus the novels of Luc Estang and of Jean Cayrol, who strike me as having something *dans le ventre*. And the stormy, tormented poetry of Pierre Emmanuel (who has written less these recent years, although we may soon expect his long poem *Babel*) is worthy of attention, as is that of Patrice de la Tour du Pin.

If Peregrinus wants to follow the major lines of French Catholic writing he may consult with profit the competent, factual survey which erudite Louis Chaigne contributes to the annual round-up *Almanach des Lettres* (Editions de Flore) or the review pages of *Etudes*, *La Vie intellectuelle*, and *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*.

But in this "time of troubles," ideas seem more important than literature. In fact, in the breakdown of a stable bourgeois world, the economic conditions of the "literary life" have become increasingly impossible. Very few writers can hope to live from their pen and, as *rentes* have evaporated in the post-war inflation, nearly all of them have to look elsewhere to *gagner leur biftek*. Raymond Dumay has recently underlined the economic impasse of the modern writer in a penetrating and pessimistic little study significantly entitled "*La Mort de la Littérature*."

Consequently, I should say that the most significant Catholic books produced in France since the war are critical and philosophical essays signed Jean Daniélou, de Lubac, Emmanuel Mounier, Gaston Fessard, Jacques Maritain, Jean Guitton, Simone Weil, rather than novels or poems. There is nothing so surprising about this. Catholic writing has simply followed the general curve of post-Liberation writing, which has produced few major novels, little great poetry (outside of Michaux and René Char), and whose most valid achievements have been philosophico-literary essays, of which André Malraux's three volumes on *La Psychologie de l'Art* and the essays of Jean-Paul Sartre, Georges Bataille, Albert Camus, Jean Paulhan, Roger Caillois, Thierry-Maul-

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nier, Raymond Aron, and Jules Monnerot constitute brilliant examples. (For background information on post-Liberation literature, the framework in which the Catholic contribution must necessarily be placed, Peregrinus may consult Gaëtan Picon's solid and exciting *Panorama de la Nouvelle Littérature française* (Editions du Point du Jour.)

In this realm of ideas and of speculation, there has been an intense and feverish activity, especially in advanced Catholic circles in Paris and Lyon. This activity falls into several loose general categories, which I can indicate here only in the most summary fashion.

(1) The desire to return "to the sources" which has stimulated considerable research and speculation in the Biblical and Patristic fields. This movement has already born fruit in the more than twenty-five volumes which have already appeared of the *Jerusalem Bible*, described as "une nouvelle Bible française, oeuvre commune d'exégètes et écrivains réunis dans une collaboration étroite, sous la direction de l'Ecole Biblique de Jérusalem, Bible qui soit à la fois fidèle au texte sacré et d'une langue vraiment française." This ambitious project has influenced the increasingly Biblical orientation of such reviews as *Maison Dieu* and *La Vie spirituelle* and has awakened a renewed interest in the Bible in all Catholic milieux. The revival of Patristic studies and (even more interesting for Peregrinus) the confrontation of Patristic thought and contemporary problems, are reflected in distinguished volumes in the collection *Sources Chrétiennes* (Editions du Cerf).

(2) The desire to establish direct contact with modern society, to favor the "incarnation" of the Church in the modern world. This movement has produced extremely diversified, sometimes controversial results. Perhaps the most representative single name in the field today is that of Joseph Folliet, editor of *La Chronique sociale de France* and the *animateur* of the annual meetings, "Les Semaines Sociales." His career synthesizes modern French Catholic social movements. Other manifestations of this *Catholicisme social* which might attract the attention of Peregrinus include: efforts to end the divorce between the Church and the working classes (*prêtres ouvriers*) and the rural populations (*petits frères de campagne*); the work of the Mission de Paris; movements such as "Economie et Humanisme" (which publishes a monthly of the same title) and, under the direction of Father Lebret, scrutinizes modern economic theory and practice in the light of Catholic doctrine, with an orientation that is well left of center; groups of such revolutionary ardor and "Christian left" impulsiveness as the R.P. Montlucard's "Jeunesse de l'Eglise."

(3) The desire to renew the missionary activity of the Church. This effort has revealed itself in two complementary forms. One recognizes that France (like most of Western society) is no longer Christian, and that the primary missionary effort of the Church in France should be directed towards

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the conversion of the pagans within its own borders. This problem of the de-Christianization of France was stated with a dramatic directness in the now-classic work of Abbé Godin, *La France, Pays de Mission*, the first volume to appear in the collection *Rencontres* (Editions du Cerf) which now includes the basic works on the missionary movement in France.

This new consciousness of the missionary problem within France has produced a new approach to the missionary problem in non-Christian areas abroad. It is reflected in series such as *La Sphère et la Croix* and *L'Eglise et le Monde* which have issued titles such as Father Jean Daniélou's *Le Mystère du Salut des Nations* and Father de Lubac's *Fondement Théologique des Missions*, in reviews such as *Eglise Vivante*, in studies such as that of Monsignor Bruno de Solages, rector of the Catholic University of Toulouse, on *Catholicisme et Civilisations*.

The war, the occupation, and the clandestine struggle against the enemy were all forces which encouraged this fermentation of ideas, which strengthened the virile desire that the Church achieve incarnation in a world so tragically in need of divine truth and divine solace. ("Incarnation" is a key-word in the modern French Catholic vocabulary, and Peregrinus will find it recurring constantly.)

During the German occupation, resistant elements among the clergy and the laity worked actively in the underground with people whom normally they would never have met. Catholics and agnostics, priests and Communist party members shared the martyrdom of deportation, learned of the fraternity of man in the appalling conditions of the concentration camps. Consequently, minority elements in the French Church emerged from the war with a strong sense of mission. They were convinced that the Church could and should be renovated, that controversial contemporary issues should be re-assessed in the light of Christian doctrine. They were insistent that an effort be made to bring about the incarnation of the Church in modern industrial society, to heal the breach between Christ and the worker which has been one of the major tragedies of European Catholicism. I well remember the excitement of those days, the headiness of the honeymoon period immediately after the Liberation, when (to cite only one piquant detail that serves to illustrate the state of mind) Aragon and Mauriac were both writing in the same weekly, *Les Lettres Françaises*, a Party-supported sheet that was astutely exploiting the tactics of "the outstretched hand" in order to infiltrate intellectual and literary circles.

POLITICALLY, too, it was a honeymoon period. The left of center MRP or the Popular Republican Movement (which has prudently evolved rightward since) led by fervent, forward-looking Catholics like Bidault, Teitgen, and de Menthon, was playing a leading rôle in the government. Even intelli-

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gent people nursed the short-lived illusion that a régime of genuine social justice might emerge from all the suffering and destruction of the war. But that, alas, was before the MRP (to quote the *mot* of one of its disillusioned followers) "had drunk the Communion wine" and sold its idealistic birth-right for a mess of politics.

For disillusion gnaws at the heart of the best and most generous elements in France. They have come to realize, in the course of the past few years, that their wartime sacrifices were in vain, that the same old forces have regained power, that "nothing really has been changed." This disillusion prevails among intellectual Catholics as well. They regard the consolidation of the influence of old-line bishops (some of whom were seriously compromised politically during the Occupation), as a movement parallel to the whitewashing and restoration of rightist political groups, currently trapped out in a variety of transparent new labels.

Peregrinus will not find the same passion, the same hope, the same impulse, generous, usually badly-disciplined energy that I found in the hungry, exciting Paris of 1944-1945. *On vieillit*, I suppose. And in this discouragement of the intellectuals, a number of other factors such as certain tendentious interpretations of the encyclical *Humani Generis* have inevitably exercised some influence as well. Promulgated in August, 1950, this encyclical, which has been much discussed in Catholic intellectual circles throughout the world, had particularly noticeable repercussions in France. In some extremist milieux, it was interpreted as an effort to repress theological research, to impose intellectual conformity, to discourage speculation, and even specifically to penalize the avant-garde of the French Church for its intellectual curiosity and ardor. A more balanced reading, reflecting, it seems to me, the feeling of most French Catholics except for the most extreme *progressiste* fringe, appeared over the signature of Henri Marrou, professor at the Sorbonne, authority on Saint Augustine and on education in antiquity, in *Esprit* (Oct., 1950), titled "Du bon usage à une Encyclique:" "Loin d'interdire, loin de décourager l'effort de recherche, le document pontifical ne fait que le promouvoir, en exigeant de lui une rigueur et une précision toujours accrues. On voit avec netteté cette encyclique, où certains n'ont voulu voir qu'obscurantisme et réaction, constitue, doit constituer, si toutefois la pensée catholique sait y répondre avec sincérité, intelligence, et vigueur, une étape peut-être décisive dans l'épanouissement d'une grande époque de théologie." Certainly the health of the Church as an institution—like the health of any living society—depends on the maintenance of a vital balance between the forces of conservation, which defend the forms of the past, and the forces of innovation, which go beyond them in order to forge those of the future.

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In the intellectual ferment of the Liberation, a minority of thinkers, fired by the possibility of creating, out of the ruins of the traditional order, a new and genuinely Christian society, pushed brilliantly forward with an ardor and audacity which astonished, dazzled, and often dismayed more conservative elements within the Church. Elsewhere in Europe and in North and South America, it was often supposed that this movement represented "French Catholic thought." Nothing, of course, could have been farther from the reality of the situation. For these various minority groups, with their speculative brilliance and their intellectual daring, constitute the *aile marchante* of contemporary French Catholicism. These pioneers of speculation have little impact, you may be sure, on the life of the average small parish somewhere in the Beauce or in Brittany, where the faithful "say their rosaries" without a thought for liturgical reform, for Christian Existentialism, or the evolutionary theories of Father Teilhard de Chardin.

Their effort, however, and an important one it was and is, does represent a search for the means of renovating traditional theological conceptions, of reintegrating the Church into modern society. But by the less sophisticated these often-daring theories were sometimes accepted too uncritically, as proven truth rather than as speculation, and threatened to endanger those unqualified to subject them to the proper historical and theological scrutiny. Rome's warning, in the *Humani Generis*, as Marrou points out, simply indicates the risks involved in advancing too rapidly over new paths of doctrine. Indeed, some of these new ideas could be profoundly unsettling for the mass of the faithful. Lambs, accustomed to pleasant valley meadows, should not be led up to dizzy crags where dwell the mountain goats.

However, Peregrinus will observe that since the encyclical, certain names, formerly constantly found among the contributors of reviews, now appear infrequently or not at all. And he will notice a definite *malaise* in the small, extremist minority that feels Rome has failed to understand the meaning and significance of their research.

One of the elements constituting this small minority is made up of the "Progressive Christians" who, during the euphoric honeymoon period, were attracted by the idea of the "Communists as the early Christians of our time" and by the possibility of reconciling Marxism and Catholicism. This highly romantic notion was soon exploded by political developments which made it clear that the Communists had chosen the rôle of the lion rather than of the martyr. However, Peregrinus will still find traces of the movement in Paris. Officially condemned by the Archbishop of Paris, the surviving *Progressistes* have been carefully nursed by the Communists for use in peace campaigns and to introduce an additional element of confusion into the already sufficiently tormented French spirit.

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A certain *progressiste* climate is still quite perceptible in some areas of left of center Catholic activities, such as "Jeunesse de l'Eglise." The organ of the *Progressistes*, *Témoignage Chrétien*, which in 1944-1945 exercised considerable influence, has declined with the group and has become almost confidential, with sentimental affiliations with such publications as André Ullmann's crypto *Tribune des Nations*, Claude Bourdet's neutralist *L'Observateur*, and *Esprit*.

TÉMOIGNAGE CHRÉTIEN, *La Pensée Catholique*, *Dieu Vivant*—this itinerary would be incomplete unless it set up a few guide-posts in the jungle of print that awaits Peregrinus in Paris.

The Catholic press covers the entire political spectrum, ranging from the infra-red *Témoignage Chrétien* through the liberal *Etudes* and *La Vie intellectuelle* to the far to the right *La Pensée Catholique*. It includes monthlies such as the curious, stimulating, peripheral, and often disquieting *Dieu Vivant*, which reflects current eschatological tendencies and is addressed to a very small, international minority. Some of these magazines, like *La Vie intellectuelle*, are deeply and intelligently involved in the political and sociological problems of our time. Others, like *Témoignages*, published by the Benedictines of the influential monastery "La Pierre qui vire" in the Morvan, hold themselves aloof from the current *mêlée* and concern themselves with questions of philosophy and art. But there are also mass-circulation weeklies, such as the *Life* style *La Vie Catholique*, whose sales of some 450,000 copies make it one of the most read papers of its class in the country. It has adroitly translated current preoccupations with liturgical reform, with Biblical and Patristic sources, with the incarnation of the Church, into an attractive form that popularizes without vulgarizing.

Peregrinus would also do well to follow monthlies like *La Table Ronde* and *La Revue de Paris* which, although not confessional, do publish the ranking French Catholic authors and are among the best purely literary reviews now available. *La Table Ronde* ran Julien Green's latest novel, *Moirra*, and carries frequent contributions by François Mauriac. It has also published texts of and several critical studies on Simone Weil, one of the most important signatures in the philosophical field to emerge since the war. In the metaphysical anguish of modern France, the spiritual struggles of this extraordinarily intelligent young *Normalienne* (who died in England during the Occupation), Jewish by birth, agnostic by education, drawn to Catholicism without ever being able to bring herself to join the Church, have awakened passionate interest.

The Catholic press, naturally, is not limited to magazines. Peregrinus need not bother with the numerous regional Catholic dailies and weeklies. He should look, however, at the official Catholic Paris daily, *La Croix*, which

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has shed its pre-war, *bonne presse* tone to emerge well-edited, prosperous and in possession of more regular subscribers than any Paris paper except *Le Figaro*. (Subscriptions, of course, should not be confused with total circulation.) It has the reputation, among envious competitors, of "being in every convent parlor." In addition, there existed, until a short while ago, *L'Aube*, the organ of the MRP, which expressed its party's liberal Catholic point of view. But *L'Aube*, sharing in the declining fortunes of the MRP, became more and more crepuscular and sank to four pages before the final darkness of insolvency settled over it.

Among the dozens of Catholic magazines currently published, I myself read regularly and for my personal pleasure (rather than for specific information) *La Vie intellectuelle* and *Etudes*. These two monthlies give excellent coverage to major issues, seen respectively from the Dominican and the Jesuit points of view. *La Vie intellectuelle* is more concerned with politics and the more "advanced." *Etudes*, destined for a wider public, is more balanced in its contents, less adventurous in its social positions, and more attractively written. As an irritant, I also regularly look at *Esprit*; I cannot say I read it, for many of its leading articles are of a willful unreadability. *Esprit* has changed radically—and scarcely for the better—since the untimely death of Emmanuel Mounier, one of the great names in modern French thought. Now, under the sociological and *marxisant* direction of Jean Domenach, it has lost its old tone of human generosity and Christian charity (which always re-deemed its occasional excesses), has moved away from the spirit of its founder, to become doctrinaire, increasingly and unrealistically political, a friend of the fellow-travelers, and carpingly and *a-priori* anti-American. (In spite of the generally cordial welcome that Peregrinus may count on receiving, he should not be surprised, as an American, to perceive undercurrents of mistrust and even of hostility on the part of French acquaintances.)

In the milieux with which this communication has been largely concerned, American Catholicism is often considered as intellectually incurious, dominated by an Irish-American hierarchy unsympathetic to Latins, wed to the things of this world, politically aggressive, and spiritually undermined by its amazing prosperity. And, at the other ideological pole, the *intégristes*, the traditionalists in the provinces, often conceive of America in the form of an *image d'Epinal*, as a country composed of Puritans and of Pagans, worshippers of gadgets and threats to the traditional French Catholic values.

No matter where he goes, Peregrinus will be in for a good deal of critical questioning. He should be ready to discuss certain ticklish problems (such as the exclusion of colored Catholics from "white" churches in the South) without a sense of inferiority, but without a chip on his shoulder either. Such discussions, at the outset, may be mutually uncomfortable, but they sometimes

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result in clearing the air and creating a mutual understanding. I am personally convinced that the fate of our culture during the next few generations will depend in part on our success in setting up real "lines of communication" between Europe and America. For real understanding, as we have sadly seen in the course of the last few years, does not emerge spontaneously from political alliances or from economic and military aid. It must be achieved on the basis of genuine values, genuinely shared. Certainly the Catholic Church (as well as Protestant and other religious groups) can play a rôle in strengthening such lines of communication. But in order to do so, we Americans must get rid of certain notions that French Catholicism is "not very solid" and rather suspect doctrinally, while the French, through contacts with the reality of the situation, must abandon the convenient myth of a pagan and materialistic America.

Peregrinus can do his share. I am sure that he will avoid from the start the twin errors of excessive admiration and excessive condemnation. Consider the pilgrim for whom everything French is automatically superior. He is speechless in admiration for the high intellectual and spiritual tone of a small minority of French Catholics, while closing his eyes to obvious shortcomings of the French Church in many fields. At the other extreme is the visitor convinced that everything European is either inferior or decadent, who too often confuses lack of material means with lack of spiritual vitality, who, with tactless if often justified criticism, widens the gulf separating Europe and America, and helps perpetuate the favorite European illusion that "the average American can't understand the complexity of the Old World." But if Peregrinus brings with him an open and curious mind, a sense of humor, and a taste for discussion, he will be able to perform a genuine service. For a synthesis certainly needs to be made between America's sometimes child-like Christian optimism and Europe's Christian pessimism, between the predominately "horizontal" American Church and predominately "vertical" Continental Catholicism.

French Catholic intellectuals are not entirely wrong when they note that Americans are threatened by a loss of spiritual intensity because of their material ease; that, in the New World, social conformity and a facile optimism are often mistaken for religious values; that we tend to prefer comfortable forms of salvation to spiritual struggle and adventurousness. Nor are we Americans at fault when we deplore the divorce between labor and much of the French Church; when we regret that large areas of France are now wholly de-Christianized; when we observe that some sectors of French Catholicism are still blindly wed to backward social and economic doctrines; when we note with misgiving that many of the best elements among French Catholic intellectuals are paralyzed by pessimism and by a sense of the Apocalypse and

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that they probably could use some of that facile American optimism. Peregrinus, of course, knows all this. And I am sure that he also knows that in trying to reach a little understanding of such complex and explosive questions, it doesn't do much good either to beat the breast or to adjust the chip on the shoulder. That it is more profitable to recognize that *la perfection n'est pas de ce monde* and then go on from there.

—JOHN L. BROWN

"Clairefontaine"

Par Brunoy

S et O

Elizabeth Langgässer

(Continued from page 150)

Finally you are near the hour,
When soul and dust are reconciled;
An angel greets the sprite below
The hollow trumpet sounds. . .

The twofold character of Elizabeth Langgässer's genius is here beautifully expressed; sprite-like and angelic traits were mingled in her with the whole force of such existential fusions as are common in our day, when nothing is more customary than flight into the realm of irresponsibility, than retiring to safe ground. But a high price must be paid by everyone who thrusts his head into the serpents' mouth. He who is not destroyed by poison brings golden grains to light.

Transl. by Carl Gaenssle

London Letter

FOR Catholics in England, the Festival of Britain which was celebrated this past summer probably held somewhat less significance than last year's centenary of "The Second Spring"—the reestablishment of the hierarchy—when they looked back over the span of a century to evaluate the progress they had made. In honor of the occasion a huge omnibus volume was published—a kind of family scrap-book, as Shane Leslie called it, with separate chapters, uneven in quality, contributed by a variety of "experts" and titled *The English Catholics, 1850-1950: Centenary Essays to Commemorate the Restoration of the Hierarchy of England and Wales*.

Perhaps exhausted by their centenary a year before the Festival, Catholics made a rather unspectacular showing during the celebrations of 1951. The exhibition, "The Catholic Way of Life," in Westminster Cathedral Hall, did not rise above mediocrity. However, the Jesuits at Mount Street Hall organized a small historical show, "English Catholic Life," which was carefully selected and presented. A third event planned by the Festival of Britain Catholic Committee was a dramatized performance of Newman's *Dream of Gerontius* with a new musical setting by Fernand Laloux. Even Robert Speaight's acting had difficulty with material so undramatic. Possibly the best that could be said was the remark of an English friend who turned to me consolingly, "Well, at least it is theologically orthodox."

It is more interesting to turn to the literary scene and to examine the present status of Catholic writers and writing in England. To be representative, the term *present* must include not merely the summer of 1951 but the past three or even four years, roughly from 1948 or 1949 to the present. My own emphasis will be predominantly on *belles lettres*, though that may not be the field in which accomplishment is most impressive.

In considering the novel, we soon become aware that we must differentiate between the various generations of Catholics writing fiction at the present. There are those like Compton Mackenzie and Sheila Kaye-Smith whose importance was recognized as long as thirty years ago, those like Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh who belong to an established middle generation, and those whose reputations are still in the making.

The most significant accomplishments of Compton Mackenzie and Sheila Kaye-Smith are in the past, but both continue to pour forth their round of tales. It is difficult to doubt that seventy-year-old Mackenzie has failed to live up to the high promise of such an early novel as *Sinister Street*, hailed by Henry James when it appeared, and recently republished. Nor has he gone beyond his *Four Winds of Love* series of the 1930's. Instead, he has become

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widely popular as a writer of farce, travel books, and diaries, and as a radio broadcaster. *Whisky Galore* (in America known as *Tight Little Island*) recently described the tragi-comedy in two little islands in the Hebrides when the war brought a whisky shortage. In 1951 followed *Monarch of the Glen* in which a hot-tempered Scottish laird discovers hikers camping on his islands and shuts them in his castle dungeon until they start to retaliate. Later the same year—for Compton Mackenzie is nothing if not prolific—appeared a travel book, *I Took a Journey*, and *The Compton Mackenzie Birthday Book*. His final stature is that of a kind of Gaelic P. G. Wodehouse who from time to time reprints his earlier and more important books.

Sheila Kaye-Smith continues to print in rapid succession her Sussex stories. Competent, with an easy craftsmanship, she has advanced little during the present generation. In 1948 came *The Lavnders and the Laurelwoods*, in 1950 *Treasurers of the Snow* (in America known as *Happy Tree*), and in 1951 *Mrs. Gailey*. But the reprinting in 1950 of *Green Apple Harvest* raises the question as to whether she has in any serious sense developed during the past three decades. Still, she has her place in the history of the novel during the 1920's, when her most important work was accomplished.

But there are two giants among the Catholic novelists. They are, of course, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh. Both are changing and developing artists.

"When Greene or Waugh publishes a book it is a national event," is the way one Englishman put it. Both Greene and Waugh make a double claim for consideration: they are widely read, and the important literary critics take them seriously as artists. The latter is not true of, for instance, Bruce Marshall. His latest novel, *Every Man a Penny* (1950), had a fairly good public but a weak critical reception, though everyone grants that it is readable.

As to Greene and Waugh the problem that the critics raise is not so much whether they are great, but rather, which are their greatest books? Is it the latest or is Greene or Waugh slipping? Is early Waugh greater than later Waugh? Is later Greene more significant than middle Greene?

In their case an interesting situation is involved. Each has become more and more a specifically Catholic novelist. This can be seen by comparing *Brideshead Revisited* with *Helena* or *The Heart of the Matter* with *The End of the Affair*. What is also interesting is that both have been working in the direction of a realism which is the antithesis of the ordinary pietistic romanticizing of Catholicism which long held sway in England and which is to a large extent still the principal emphasis in the American Catholic novel. It is perhaps a sign that the English Catholic writer, so long on the defensive, has at long last emerged from a state of seige and in the midst of the contemporary bankruptcy of ideals does not feel that he must sugar-coat Catholicism to make it acceptable. The Catholics pictured in their novels are no

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longer plaster saints—indeed, many a Catholic critic has objected because he would prefer a little more plaster and a little less flesh and blood.

Because *The End of the Affair* was so recently published, it is, of course, most in the news just now, though the sound and fury raised by *The Heart of the Matter* has hardly died down. Earlier in his career Greene remarked that he was not so much a Catholic novelist as a novelist who is Catholic. But the progress from *Brighton Rock* to *The Power and the Glory* to *The Heart of the Matter* to *The End of the Affair* makes clear that he must now reverse his statement. The bold and positive employment of the supernatural in the very structure of the plot in his latest book—whether one feels it is intrusive or not—leaves no doubt of his attempt to be a Catholic novelist. *Brighton Rock* may have had a specifically Catholic theme, *The Heart of the Matter* may have been, as Waugh remarked, "a book which only a Catholic could write and only a Catholic can understand," but this is even truer of *The End of the Affair*, where the theme is far more positive and affirmative, embracing not only an Inferno and a Purgatorio but also a Paradiso.

The publication in 1947 (1949, here) of *Nineteen Stories*, containing nothing written later than 1941 and, as Greene himself has said, "merely the by-products of a novelist's career," was overshadowed by the appearance in 1951 of *Lost Childhood and Other Essays*, the first collection of his critical essays, important in emphasizing his main critical preoccupations and closely related to his novels. In writing, for instance, of Mauriac—a man whom Greene has done much to introduce to English readers and who is becoming increasingly popular in England—he holds: "With the death of James [among other items, the book contains five essays on James] the religious sense was lost to the English novel, and with the religious sense went the sense of the importance of the human act. It was as if the world of fiction had lost a dimension." It is Greene in the present generation who is restoring "the religious sense" to the novel and adding a new dimension to English fiction.

There are those who hold that *The Power and the Glory* is Greene's greatest novel, but in his latest, instead of escaping to foreign lands (whether Mexico or Africa), by placing his setting in home territory he has created an immediacy lacking in the earlier work.

Heinemann is publishing a new uniform edition of Greene, and the first full-volume study of him, by Kenneth Allott and Miriam Farris, two lecturers at Liverpool University, has just made its appearance. Allott and Farris's book is a good if not brilliant one. Avoiding extravagant praise, it maps out the main themes or "obsessions" of Greene and carefully examines his development. It is especially helpful in making one see the direction of his entire career, and Greene emerges from the study with added stature.

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His severest critic has been a Catholic, Derek Traversi, who wrote two long articles in *The Twentieth Century*. In the issues of March and April 1951 this *advocatus diaboli* presents his case. Traversi's critique is often tightly organized, but one suspects that he tends to identify Greene with his characters, a procedure resulting in psychological rather than literary evaluation.

It was at his home, Piers Court, where I found Evelyn Waugh working on a new novel, that I read a prepublication copy of *The End of the Affair*. Waugh's work, too, has been controversial, and the constant question has been whether or not his latest work is also his best. He too has had wide popular success. Recently the Penguin series announced, "Evelyn Waugh now joins those authors—including Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and D. H. Lawrence—who have had ten of their books published simultaneously as Penguins." He, too, is placed by literary critics at the forefront of England's most accomplished writers.

Brideshead had shocked many. Some Catholics were aghast that they were not presented as spotless exceptions in a decadent world; non-Catholics revolted at the deathbed scene where Waugh uncompromisingly introduced grace as a transcendent reality. Yet the book has been called by one critic "the first novel by a Catholic devoted to Catholics and Catholicism in England sufficiently serious to be considered as a work of art."

The past three years have brought two major books, *The Loved One* and *Helena*. It is hard to see how anyone can fail to consider *The Loved One* a nearly perfect work of art, with the target of its satire far broader and more important than that in *Decline and Fall*, *Vile Bodies*, *Black Mischief* or even in *A Handful of Dust*. That it is a macabre attack on all of modern materialism ought to be apparent, though one does meet those disconcerting people who seem to think that it is directed solely at morticians. To see it as a satire on the embalmed as well as the embalmers makes its larger target more evident. Waugh was accused of airing a personal grievance; indeed he might be accused of too detached a ferocity. If so, then it is this detachment that has made *The Loved One* very nearly awe-inspiring.

But at least people fought over *Brideshead* and *The Loved One*. *Helena*, in which he goes back to the first English saint for his material, puzzled them or met with silence—a silence caused, I think, by the fact that it is difficult for readers to confess that they are confronted with an entirely different kind of book. Like Greene, Waugh refuses to repeat previous successes, and the technical and stylistic brilliance of *Helena* is a new achievement. What one reviewer said of Greene applies equally to Waugh: "We cannot help salute the courage and artistic integrity which have enabled him, at the height of fame and success, to refuse the safety of familiar ways." A very different work from *The Loved One* and a more integral one than *Brideshead*, *Helena* brings Waugh a new eminence.

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The controversies as to which is Greene's or Waugh's greatest book will probably go on for many years, but it is incontrovertible that those two constitute the top strata of English Catholic novelists.

When one asks the English Catholic who ranks next, opinions differ widely, though there is little hesitancy in asserting that the gap between Waugh and Greene at the top and a third writer is a generously wide one.

It may be that he is David Jones, who is reported to have a new novel in the offing. Known as an artist and painter, Jones won the Hawthornden prize back in 1937 with *In Parenthesis*, a book that many discriminating critics consider epoch-making among war books. Faber and Faber keep it in print, but until his new book appears we must hold our judgment in abeyance. Monica Baldwin's *I Leap over the Wall* created such a stir that few readers paid sufficient attention to her very genuine power of expression; she, too, is said to be about to publish further work.

A name frequently mentioned is that of Antonia White. Dealing largely with convent school life, she has written two novels, seventeen years apart, and she, too, is rumored to have neared the completion of a new book. Her first, *Frost in May*, was highly acclaimed as a minor masterpiece and was recently reprinted with a very laudatory preface by Elizabeth Bowen. Her second novel, *The Lost Traveller* (1950), though probably less successful, was a far more difficult and ambitious task. Waugh, one of her admirers, holds that with *The Lost Traveller* she established herself as one of the best novelists of the day with a place beside Elizabeth Bowen and Ivy Compton-Burnett. The advance over her earlier book some critics have described in terms of maturity and poise, of understanding added to irony, compassion to criticism, charity to penetration.

David Jones, Monica Baldwin, and Antonia White have been sparse in their production, but one of the most active young novelists in recent years has been the exuberant and high-spirited young satirist, Aubrey Menen, whose books have also had a minor vogue in America. And indeed, it is difficult not to be enthusiastic about him. In rapid succession he has produced with a genuine note of brilliance three novels which are pungent satires on modern civilization. The *Prevalence of Witches* was greeted by the *London Times* as "A lively and original first novel, a novel of ideas subscribing to the neo-Peacockian school of amusing, intelligent conversation, of *South Wind* and *Chrome Yellow*." Reviewers found it ironic and impudent and yet having beneath the farcically contrived situations a philosophical profundity.

His second novel, *The Stumbling Stone* (1949), a witty and sardonic satire on professional do-gooders confronted by a really saintly man, was also successful with the critics. Beneath all the fun is the ultimate question, can one love one's neighbor without also loving God?

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The Backward Bride: A Sicilian Scherzo (1950) is a really brilliant piece of absurdity even if occasionally the sense of the ridiculous almost runs away with Menen. Here he takes a slap at the fads and foibles of our day—existentialism, psychoanalysis, free love. It is the mocking story of an unsophisticated Sicilian girl, brought to Europe by her advanced young husband, taking by storm the citadels of unreason and the forts of folly. She is the triumph of pure innocence over portentous nonsense—a theme dear to Menen's heart.

A contemporary of Waugh, Harold Acton (indeed he is said to have been the model for Anthony Blanche in *Brideshead*—but Anthony was, of course, a composite portrait) produced quite some years ago *Peonies and Ponies*, a mocking satire on the cosmopolitan and parasitical white colony of pre-war Peking; his most recent novel, *Prince Isidore* (1951) was not so successful. One of his greatest gifts, his ability to look at himself with a sense of wit and humor, is evident in his recent *Memoirs of an Aesthete*. From almost his infancy an aesthete, Acton became a leader of the Oxford aesthetes of the mid-twenties and now lives in Italy (last year he published *Italy*), where his family has long had a home in Florence. A citizen of the world, he represents a group of English Catholics who are sensitive, civilized, urbane.

An English Catholic who has a penchant for writing historical novels which have been uniformly well received by the critics is Alfred Duggan, who published in rapid succession *Knight without Armor* (1950), *The Conscience of the King* (1951) and the *Little Emperors* (1951). All deal with early British history (ranging from the fifth century to the First Crusade) and reflect an erudite historical sense combined with an easy and readable style. Reconstructing little-known events and people, Duggan is a serious historian who has won respect if not enthusiasm.

Novelists who are really minor suggest themselves but must be passed over. George Scott-Moncrieff's *Death's Bright Shadow* (1948) failed to win much praise. One reviewer, not entirely unfairly, summed up Viola Meynell's novel *Ophelia* (1951) by saying, "The characters remain as inert as that Ophelia from whom the book takes its title."

Significant are two unconventional and experimental novelists. One, David Mathew, is better known for his historical works such as *Social Structure in Caroline England* and *The Age of Charles I*.

His *Mango on the Mango Tree* recently appeared in both England and America. The plan is at the same time simple and complex: on an airliner bound for Africa are a dozen passengers representing different modern types, though anyone who knows David Mathew's previous work realizes that his skill at the pen portrait avoids anything like stock characters; there is practically no action in the book, but instead a probing of the ideals and frustrations, the ambitions

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and the hollownesses of the characters thus accidentally thrown together. The result is a witty and tolerant and yet biting indictment of the values of the contemporary wasteland. With a skill that prevents the book from becoming obvious all this is done rather obliquely and indirectly. The novel has always been a flexible and difficult genre to define, and the reader may be not a little baffled as to whether to call *Mango on the Mango Tree* a novel, a series of sketches, a group of interior monologues, or a modern *Canterbury Tales* without narrative and without goal. David Mathew's style is so urbane that it is possibly a trifle precious.

An experimental first book of another kind is *The Dividing of Time*, by Elizabeth Sewell, who also writes short stories and literary criticism (*Structure of Poetry*, 1951) and has little patience with conventional approaches. In *The Dividing of Time*, several complex levels of reality are explored almost simultaneously. Against the background of a dull civil service position, a girl wanders forth in different directions on seven planes or selves or images. Reviewers have seen in this interior autobiography, touched with symbolism and fantasy, parallels to Dorothy Richardson, Rilke, and Kafka, and the style mirrors a combination of reality and dream-projection by using prose and poetry in evocative counterpointing. Elizabeth Sewell's short stories are soon to be collected.

But probably the outstanding Catholic short story writer is Christopher Sykes, who is also versatile, for his accomplishments in the field of the memoir and the novel are also high. Recently half a dozen of his stories were published under the title *Character and Situation*. Sykes, like Menen, has been in the diplomatic service, and his stories are often set in the Middle East. He writes about the interplay of individuals (and he has a faculty for selecting interesting characters, even at times eccentric and fantastic) and the society in which they find themselves: the interaction of character and situation. Not all of his stories are equally successful, but when they are they unite wit and penetration with unpretentious craftsmanship.

His novel, *Answer to Question 33*, is placed against a background of England and the Middle East, places which Sykes knows well. The combination of satire and nostalgia makes this a delicate and at the same time brilliant work.

Sykes has still another book to his credit in recent years. *Four Studies in Loyalty* presents biographical sketches of a varied and extraordinary set of *dramatis personae* devoted to special causes or loyalties. Sykes' gift of narrative and of character portrayal, touched with both irony and compassion, makes him one of the most important of the young English writers.

In a world where there are few who have a basic set of values, the English Catholic writer has been in a specially advantageous position as a satirist,

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and he has (unlike the American Catholic author) taken advantage of it. Much of the triumph of Waugh, Menen, Acton, Mathew, and Sykes is in the field of satire. And J. B. Morton continues to sign his "By the Way" column in the *Daily Express* as the Beachcomber. A gallery of his most recent creations appeared as *The Tibetan Venus* (1951).

BECAUSE in England the accomplishment in poetry is weaker and less hopeful, Catholics must look to the past rather than to the present or the future. Two poets of a previous generation are still in their midst, Alfred Noyes and Hilaire Belloc. There was a great Catholic fanfare for Noyes' seventieth birthday—a large dinner and its accompanying tributes—but the man who was hailed at the beginning of his career by Meredith and Swinburne has never risen to the first rank. Hilaire Belloc now lives largely in the past and has written nothing during the past decade, though *Hilaire Belloc: An Anthology of His Prose and Verse* has just appeared as a kind of last testament.

Two other poets must be recognized. Roy Campbell is already well established, and the appearance of his *Collected Poems* suggests both the variety and the unity of his poetic career. Probably his satiric verse, such as the *Georgiad*, is most widely known, though its fame has obscured Campbell's other virtues. Yet it is true that he has remained a poet of statement rather than of evocation. Rather different is his latest venture, a translation of *The Poems of St. John of the Cross*, a project for which his years in Spain helped to prepare him. Martin C. D'Arcy has contributed a preface, and the reviewers have been debating and quarreling as to whether Campbell's translation is the best poetic translation of St. John of the Cross that has yet appeared. Campbell's autobiography, not unfittingly to be entitled *Light on a Dark Horse*, has been announced by Hollis and Carter and will undoubtedly be greeted—as all of Campbell's works have been—by vituperation or by a conspiracy of silence.

The poems of F. T. Prince, seen occasionally in *The Listener* or *The Month*, mark him as one of the most promising of the yet unestablished poets and make one anticipate the publication of the new volume of his poems which is rumored to be coming.

But here the list of contemporary English Catholic poets seems to stop. The primary intention of this letter has been to concentrate on *belles lettres*, but for a more true or full view of the state of English Catholic writing it is necessary at least to mention certain other fields. Highly respected has been the intellectual caliber of Bernard Wall; *A European Note-book* and *These Changing Years* appeared a few years ago, and the first volume of his *Italian Life and Landscape* has just been followed by a second. Barbara Ward, for many years an assistant editor of the *Economist*, has now moved to Australia,

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and her *West at Bay* and *Policy for the West* have been reprinted frequently. Christopher Hollis has been a busy M.P., and his latest book is *Can Parliament Survive?* Out of the sectarian orbit but in the field of polemical history and for years a force as an editor of the *English Review* is Douglas Jerrold.

All these are laymen. Three or four priests, I would say, have won the respect of a wide though discriminating public: Ronald Knox, David Mathew, Martin C. D'Arcy, and possibly C. C. Martindale. Of David Mathew we have spoken. D'Arcy's *Mind and Heart of Love* is currently being translated into French. Ronald Knox has been called "the most distinguished ecclesiastic in the English-speaking world," and many Americans know his recent books, sermons, and translations. The latest is *Stimuli*, little sermons or reflections reprinted from the *Sunday Times*. Two Knox books published in 1950 probably should be emphasized: *Spiritual Aeneid*, the story of his conversion first told thirty years ago and now republished with a new preface, and his monumental *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion*. The latter, along with his Biblical translations, is undoubtedly his *magnus opus*. In an age of specialization it represents the triumph of the man of letters who combines charm with vast scholarship. One can easily understand why he took thirty years to write it.

The leading Catholic historian is Christopher Dawson. His importance is suggested by his publisher, F. J. Sheed: "The greatness of Christopher Dawson as an historian lies in what he wrote; his significance for the Catholic revival lies in how he wrote it. He was totally without the siege mentality . . . He asserted, and used all his magnificent powers to establish as so, that religion is the dynamic element in every society, so that as religion weakens society is devitalized. It is a view flat contrary to the one he found in possession. Yet no one has ever accused him of propaganda." He recently delivered the Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh.

In the field of biography, B. D. Wyndham Lewis not long ago published his *Boswell*, and the second volume of James Pope-Hennessy's life of *Monckton Milnes* has been announced by Constable. Michael de la Bedoyère, the editor of the *Catholic Herald*, after writing *Catherine, Saint of Siena*, dealt with one of the most controversial modern figures in *Baron von Hügel*, a man often referred to as the thinker who next after Newman has most deeply influenced, particularly among non-Catholics, religious thought in England.

Recently Philip Caraman translated from the Latin and meticulously edited *John Gerard: The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, to be published in America by Pellegrini and Cudahy (with the title *The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest*). Covering eighteen years, it is an exacting account by a Jesuit of Elizabethan times who, disguised as a country gentleman, led a hunted life, secretly saying Mass and making converts. It is told with considerable narrative skill,

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and in an introduction Graham Greene has pointed out that we can read it like a contemporary document with a real sense of immediacy, because it is not unlike the exploits of the underground and resistance during the last war.

To an American visitor there are in England a rather surprising number of Catholic art critics of good standing. E. I. Watkin's eclectic (or Augustinian-Bonaventurian) *Philosophy of Form* has just been issued in a third edition. The latest book of John Rothenstein, the director of the Tate, was his *Turner*, and Elizabeth Rothenstein has just edited *The Virgin and the Child*, an anthology of prose and poetry with reproductions of great but not always familiar paintings presenting this story from the Immaculate Conception through the childhood of Christ. John Pope-Hennessy's *The Complete Works of Paolo Uccello* followed his *Nicholas Hilliard and Sienese Quattrocento Painting*. Martin Cooper's *Opera Comique and French Music: From the Death of Berlioz to the Death of Faure* were well reviewed. The appearance of Edward Sackville-West's *The Record Guide* is a reminder that Sackville-West is not only a sensitive, readable, and lively music critic but a talented novelist and a literary critic as well. Though he has not written a novel in seventeen years, his *Simpson* was recently reissued. In 1949 his collected literary criticisms, *Inclinations*, made one reviewer ask, "How many critics writing today have this breadth and depth of culture?" Some readers might find in it a touch of hauteur; of the novel, he says for instance: "The chief persons . . . must possess an appreciable education and/or sensibility . . . Genuine tragedy at a low level of mentality is a contradiction in terms, and attempts to create it . . . produce an impression of impertinence."

The most important literary critic among the English Catholics is, unquestionably, Martin Turnell, whose two most recent volumes, *Classical Moment* and *The Novel in France*, are fortunately well known in America.

Much of the best literary criticism will, of course, be found in magazines. *The Tablet*, under the editorship of Douglas Woodruff, carries few articles devoted to criticism, but it has a review section where one finds work by Turnell, Waugh, Dru, Scott-Moncrieff, D. B. Wyndham Lewis, Leslie, and Speaight (whose work also appears in such places as the *Dublin Review* and the *Times* and who is soon to publish a collection of his critical essays). The *Downside Review*—one of the few magazines in England which has evidenced the impact of the "new" theology—and *Blackfriars* print occasional literary articles. They are more numerous in the *Dublin Review* (edited by Tom Burns); beside notable continentals such as Maritain, Madaule and Marcel, will be found critical work by T. S. Gregory, Bernard Wall, Christopher Dawson, Harman Grisewood, Martin Turnell, and Derek Traversi.

Among the little quarterlies one of the most interesting is *The Wind and the Rain*, edited by a young and promising Catholic, Neville Braybrooke, who attempts to exclude the sectarian and parochial note.

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By far the most significant Catholic magazine in England just now is *The Month*, under the editorship of Philip Caraman. Those who know only the "old" *Month* will be astonished at the salutary change which has taken place. Only two years ago it became virtually a new magazine. Instead of placing almost all its emphasis on theology and philosophy it has branched out to embrace poetry, short stories, and articles on art, music, and literature. Its efforts have been rewarded by a new respect, and it receives notice on the part of those outside the Church. In my opinion, it is the finest magazine of letters that the English Catholics have as yet produced. Its list of contributors reads like a catalogue of the important English Catholic writers, and it also welcomes such writers as C. S. Lewis or Jocelyn Brooke. Here will be found such names as those of Greene, Waugh, Sackville-West, Devlin, Dawson, D'Arcy, Copleston, Hawkins, Leslie, Grisewood, Turnell, Turner, Knox, Cooper, Rothenstein, Speaight.

An American looking over the panorama of contemporary English Catholic letters cannot help feeling our relative poverty and mediocrity. But as I met English Catholic authors, editors, and publishers, I found them not at all satisfied with their present or their future. Possibly this is because—though none of them mentioned it—English Catholic writers are totally unrepresented in exactly that field in which in England just now there is an important and vigorous movement: the restoration of verse and poetry to religious drama. The most significant movement in London during the past few years has been a revolution in which Catholics have taken no part at all. Eliot's *Cocktail Party* ran in London well into the Spring of 1951. The year before, four of Fry's plays were running concurrently at major London theaters. His latest play, *A Sleep of Prisoners*, written for the Festival of Britain, was showing this summer at Saint Thomas' Church just off Regent Street, at the same time that Catholics were trying to present Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*—a retreat to the Second Spring of a century ago.

—JOHN PICK

September, 1951

Bourne House

13 Devonshire Place, W. 1

Book Reviews

The Autumn Review Section will feature books by and about Europeans.

Prince Caspian. The Return to Narnia.

By C. S. Lewis. Illustrations by Pauline Baynes. Macmillan. \$2.50.

Yes. I mean that at Wishwood he will find another Harry.

The man who returns will have to meet

The boy who left. Round by the stables,

In the coach-house, in the orchard,

In the plantation, down the corridor

That led to the nursery, round the corner

Of the new wing, he will have to face him—

And it will not be a very jolly corner.

When the loop in time comes—and it does not come for everybody—

The hidden is revealed, and the spectres show themselves.

(The Family Reunion)

It is true that the loop in time does not come for everybody, but it came for Clive Staples Lewis' four latter-day Bastable children as they sat, surrounded by their school trunks and play boxes, on a seat at a railway junction. And when it came so unexpectedly, Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy were able to turn a jollier corner than any of the Jamesian or Eliotic variety. It was Narnia to which they were summoned back by the blast wound by Prince Caspian on Susan's magic oliphant. Narnia which is another kind of Wishwood altogether than the Wishwood of *The Family Reunion*—a Wishwood which is partly that of folktale, partly the Brocchande of *Phantastes* and partly the golden-fruited, green rampart of Eden garden—Narnia where primordial desires are gratified and heraldry is more real than a circus. There the boy who returns must meet the man who left. There the hidden is revealed, and the spectres show themselves; the revelations are fewer, however, and the spectres less hideous than in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. For,

as in the parallel case of Earth, the great cosmic war which was in the beginning has entered into its human phase. The gods still aid the heroes, and the warlocks can be recalled by necromancy—"whoever heard of a witch that really died? You can always get them back!" But, on the whole, the heroes now fight out the war within their own breasts and against those anti-heroes who, like themselves, are men; who, as Lion Aslan tells Prince Caspian, "'come of the Lord Adam and the Lady Eve. And that is both honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor in earth.'"

There is no new revelation for a Narnia grown ancient; only the old great tidings must be recovered. Meanwhile the work of redemption goes on; for beasts and trees, as well as for men; and for the myriad creatures of mythology who, in Dr. Lewis' mythopoeic imagination which reconciles myth and orthodoxy, belong in sober earnest to the great Chain of Being and to the even Greater Dance which is the atomic cement of creation. As far back as *The Pilgrim's Regress*, Dr. Lewis had anticipated Simone Weil's haunting question: *How can Christianity call itself catholic if the universe itself is left out?* Like the interplanetary trilogy of which it is the nursery redaction, *Prince Caspian* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* draw their being not only from the Book of Revelation, but from the Wordsworthian Book of Earth and the Lewis-Jung Book of Folk Memory and Legendary Tradition.

It becomes increasingly apparent, also, that Narnia is not only an exquisitely scaled Divine Comedy in miniature, at once Mozartian light and bread-and-butter solid, but, in addition, Dr. Lewis' own private Angria and Gondal combined. The horn

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that calls back to Narnia the hero children is the horn of Roncevaux. Dr. Lewis, too, *aime le son du cor, le soir, au fond du bois*. Reepicheep, the Cyranoesque mouse, not only adds a Master Mouse to the Master Cat of folk lore. Reepicheep, whom we met in another murine avatar in *That Hideous Strength*, belongs to the earliest affections of the Ulster child who is still Clive Staples Lewis.

Commenting once on George MacDonald, Anne Fremantle made this very perceptive remark: "Throughout the materialistic nineteenth century the stream of interior life that waters English literature so fruitfully, from Piers Plowman to Perelandra, was to a great extent driven, not underground, but into writing for children."

The reverse begins to be true today. The sacred river Alph has burst into the sunlight once again in France and Britain—at least in the deep river-bed of what John Henry Newman used to call the "ethical" novel, by which he meant the normal novel of social criticism, the novel of the central tradition, represented in his day by the works of Thackeray and Trollope. But, in the main, mature fantasy grows more and more perverse. Baron Charlus reads the Tarot cards. Romanticism continues to flow through dark caverns of aberration. The homosexual's narcissistic mirror reduces normality to Lilliputian dimensions. The magic flute blows only the death of love. And, within the charmed wood of childhood, the magic flute no longer sounds at all. One hears no more there than the skirling of positivist whistles summoning into empty being the "socially significant" excitement of the prosaic and the schematic. If only for the sake of regaining imaginative equilibrium, the present cannot afford to ignore the literally extraordinary thing that Dr. Lewis has been doing, over the past decade, in his creation of a new kind of fantasy on both child and adult levels. Were it not for the strong sustenance he offers us, we should all of us be starved for want of right fairy food

in our antiseptic age of literary antibiotics and all too little *alta fantasia*.

As befits the child reader it is aimed at, *Prince Caspian's* Great Dance is more a rustic hay than a court pavane; though it is a court pavane as well. Fossegriimmen, the merman of the waterfall, directs, not grave Prospero. Hardanger fiddles sound shrill in it instead of Cremona violins. It is simply scored for a music-box tinkling sleepily under the night lights. But the ancient glee of childhood and the still more ancient magic of the pre-human creation run through every page. Canon Kingsley, whose human sympathies and imaginative intuitions were far broader than his doctrinal latitudinarianism would have led one to suspect, wrote a child's story in a somewhat Puritan convention that fulfills primordial desires every bit as well as George MacDonald's contemporary fantasies in a rather more Catholic vein. One wonders, nevertheless, what *The Water Babies'* two liberal beldames, Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby and Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, for all their progressive notions, would have made of *Prince Caspian's* Bacchus and Priapus, and of the ululated *Euan, eu-oi-oi-oi* that frees the tired Mistress from her classroom. Not the least of Dr. Lewis' achievements here is to have found acceptable fairy tale symbols for sexual ecstasy. The children will not understand, of course; but they will feel in their bones that something right is taking place. Not only has he restored Eve's garden; he has done that even harder thing—cleansed old Priapus without destroying him and, in the process, offered the adult reader a counterweight for the arid perceptions of Greene and the airless passions of Mauriac, to say nothing of the joyless epithalamia of Eliot. When Susan sensibly remarks to her sister, "I wouldn't have felt very safe with Bacchus and all his wild girls if we'd met them without Aslan," Lucy does not yet know how truly she speaks when she replies: "I should think not." Long live the

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weeds and the wilderness yet! Blessed are the children of them that have been shaken, as Susan will grow up to learn, even if another and, in the end, a wilder destiny awaits Lucy. It would be too much, perhaps, to say that these particular sequences of *Prince Caspian* reconcile Comus and the Lady. But it might not be at all too much to suggest that they teach how Comus may be baptized.

One cannot expect Dr. Lewis to go on pulling surprises out of an avuncular hat forever; even the most original of uncles must one day repeat himself; and it must be freely confessed that, when measured against its more radiant predecessor, *Prince Caspian* has little to offer that is utterly new. The dealings with the animals who, as the Badger soberly and accurately remarks, never change, are, if possible, even more tenderly diverting than was the case in *The Lion*. One hesitates to say that Dr. Lewis is better at this enchanting game than Kenneth Grahame or Rudyard Kipling or, for that matter, than that nursery Trollope, Beatrix Potter. But he delves much deeper than they into what might properly be styled the metaphysic of the animal creation. His dolphin-play in the semantic realm of Old Solar remains inspired—one's curiosity is whetted the more and one's impatience grows the keener over Dr. Lewis' unconscionable delay in bringing forward his long-awaited book on the *mystique* of philology.

There is always a saga echo in the imaginative writing of Lewis; a taste of the ash-spear; a relish of the barrow. This time the invocation of King Nain carries us into the trans-channel realm of Oberon and *le nain jaune*. But even here the atmosphere is more the bracing air of the *Chansons de geste* than the espaliere warmth of Perrault's sanded court alleys. The children are daunted by the persistence of evil in the Narnia they had once helped Lion Aslan cleanse—Narnian ages ago, though but one year has passed in England. The adult reader finds himself

remembering Charles the Emperor's great gesture of acceptance and despair at the end of the greatest of all the *Chansons*, then when the archangel warns the weary old priest-king that war has broken out again on the marches of his empire, and that he must summon his hosts and ride to the succor of the Christians who cry out upon his mighty name:

Li emperedre n'i volsist aler mie:
"Deus!" dist li reis, "si penose est ma
vide!"
Ploret des oeilz, sa barbe blanche tiret.

The Emperor was loath to go.
"God!" said the King. "How heavy
is my life!"
Sore did he weep. He tore his hoary
beard.

Here ends the *geste* that scribe Lewis has set down. But there are indications in the final chapter that, of the four children who walk out through the little door in space and time, Edmund and Lucy, at least, will find their way back to Narnia for still a third emprise. There is even a hint that, like Celia in *The Cocktail Party*, little Lucy may somehow be specially called. Meanwhile, if any single moral—an old-fashioned word, granted, but still a good one for Earth as well as Narnia—emerges from the second volume of Dr. Lewis' miniature *épopée*, it is that goodness is always having to go underground and yet that, in the end, it always triumphs over evil. We know now—a thing we did not know in the ostrich Twenties—that we can neither hide ourselves nor conceal from our children the grim fact that the wolf-age of the historical cycle has returned. But we can do something much better. We can armor our own weary and their eager and generous young personalities with the bright armor of just such heroic parables as this one of *Prince Caspian*, the tale of the imperial child whose very name suggests that Byzantium of idea which is to history what what Logres is to Britain.

—CHARLES A. BRADY

Canisius College

BOOK REVIEWS

Der Verlag Herder und das Katholische Leben 1801-1951

Beiheft der Herder-Korrespondenz V (1951)

Herder Verlag, probably the greatest and most international of all Catholic publishing houses, celebrated its sesquicentennial on October 13, 1951. A special number of *Herder-Korrespondenz Orbis Catholicus*, the monthly information bulletin, tells us of the accomplishments of this firm in various fields of Catholic literature. Seven specialists refer in as many critical bibliographies to the evolution of Catholic disciplines as seen through some standard works published by the company. These fields are: theology, religious education, general education, social sciences, history, literature, art, natural sciences from a religious viewpoint, and lexicography.

It is a particular pleasure to note that the literary domain, poorly represented in earlier years, has gained more and more in importance. Outstanding Catholic authors such as Peter Doerfler, Werner Bergengruen, Ida Friederike Goerres-Coudenhove, Reinhold Schneider, Lili Sertorius have found their mouthpiece in the Herder Publishing Company. Criticism and select translations from foreign literatures, too, contribute to the growing importance of the literary department.

Herder Verlag offers a harbor to Catholic intellectuality, sincerity and fairness.

—H.H.

The End of the Affair. By Graham Greene.
The Viking Press. \$3.00.

Sarah Miles, immediately before her death, to her former lover, Maurice Bendrix: "You took away all my lies and self-deceptions like they clear a road of rubble for somebody to come along it, somebody of importance, and now He's come, but you cleared the way yourself."

Maurice Bendrix: "If I were writing a novel I would end it here; a novel, I used to think, has to end somewhere, but I'm beginning to believe my realism has been

at fault all these years, for nothing now in life ever seems to end."

"Faber Crompton produced a formula. He laid it down like a bank-note."

The affair which has no ending is, as everyone now knows, the adulterous love of Maurice Bendrix, an author, and Sarah Miles, wife of a pathetically mediocre civil servant. On Maurice's part love is a violent physical expression of his own envy, malice and self-contempt; on Sarah's a release of her naturally good but frustrated instincts. Compelled by a mysterious inspiration, she offers to give up Maurice if the God in whom she vaguely believes will save him from death. Maurice lives and she keeps her promise. This fidelity leads her on to heroic self-denial and a kind of sanctity. After her death miracles occur, the moral miracle of Bendrix' realization that God exists, and several physical miracles attributed to her by her friends and associates. Through Sarah the finger of God has reached into the lives of people who had resisted or ignored His presence.

The novel is dramatically presented in five acts and an epilogue. Act I reveals, in adroit flashbacks, the actual affair of Bendrix and Sarah, the relationship of each of them and both together to her husband, Henry. Bendrix has not seen Sarah for some time, Henry is puzzled by her mysterious absences, her change of heart. In Act II, Bendrix, in ironic collaboration with her husband, attempts to pry out the mystery of Sarah's transformation. He hires a private detective, receives regular reports on her whereabouts. Obsessed with jealousy and pique he interviews her new-found friends, the Smyths. His intuition that God is behind it all is finally confirmed when he reads Sarah's stolen diary. That document—larded with Bendrix' commentary—is an intensely interesting spiritual autobiography which serves as Act III of this dramatic novel. Act III is a startling contrast of viewpoint, in which Sarah's generous soul not only reveals itself but the shallowness and meanness, the pathetic in-

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stability of Bendrix. Armed with the knowledge of her love for him, Bendrix confronts Sarah in Act IV and urges her to return to him. Briefly Bendrix struggles against God. "She loves us both, I thought, but if there is to be a struggle between an image and a man, I know who will win." Bendrix was wrong. The struggle, Act V, was between man and the God-man. Bendrix lost. Sarah dies at least partially from the anguish of divided love but firm in her new faith. The epilogue takes care of the funeral, the miracles and Bendrix' judgment of his own experience. "O God, You've done enough. You've robbed me of enough. I'm too old and tired to learn love. Leave me alone forever."

It must be evident, even from this inadequate summary, that *The End of the Affair* is theoretically a clearer book than *Brighton Rock* or *The Heart of the Matter*. Like Father Crompton, Greene has produced a formula, and if he has not laid it down like a bank-note, neither has he hidden it in the contradictions and obscurities of sheer action. He has moved away from his old contempt for natural goodness and heartiness and in Sarah Miles he has pointed out the deep consonance and collaboration between right human instincts and divine love. To make his concepts clearer he has risked artistic failure. By interpreting his own drama, by awarding to Bendrix theological attitudes which, it may be thought, are improbable in a man of his professed materialism, he has expanded the hitherto minor note of speculation in his still predominantly impressionistic writing. His novel, as a novel, does end emotionally with Sarah's death. The concluding pages, the epilogue, begin a new action. Moreover, Sarah's diary, intrinsically valuable though it is, is the thinking of a woman who has meditated for a long time on the paradoxes of Mauriac's familiar desert of love. Yet it is clear that Greene has interrupted his imagination, has violated good technical procedure, as certain modern critics have defined it, in order to

do greater justice to the total experience which includes not merely immediate sensibilities and private perceptions, but a transcendent spiritual order—in short, the realm of concepts.

This is perhaps to say that the serious novelist will always fall short of perfection in proportion to the depth and height and breadth of his experience; that near perfection is more nearly achieved in the rendering of a limited experience. In *The End of the Affair* Greene has added to his work a new conceptual dimension and new types of character in Sarah Miles and the sure-minded Father Crompton. We are thus under notice that Greene is growing rapidly, and in a direction that some of his admirers have not been led to expect.

—FRANCIS X. CONNOLLY

Fordham University

Word Index to James Joyce's Ulysses. By Miles L. Hanley. University of Wisconsin Press. \$4.75.

Professor Hanley has been amiably designated by Joyce himself in *Finnegan's Wake* as "the Madison man." Assisted by Martin Joos, Theresa Fein and many others, Professor Hanley produced the *Index* in 1937 as an N.Y.A. project. The present is a third printing of a work that has proved to be of great assistance to the Joyce reader who is looking for recurrent imagery and structural features in *Ulysses*. As a philologist Professor Hanley had made a large collection of phonograph records of New England speech and was dismayed at the prospect of attempting to index this material without some technical experiment. Professor W. F. Waddell suggested that the necessary experience for the job might be acquired by first indexing some interesting body of prose of comparable size, and cited *Ulysses*. Professor Hanley eventually envisaged the index to *Ulysses* as of use to psychologists interested in the process of association, to students of style imagery and literary technique; ". . . to educators and linguists its greater value will be its evi-

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dence on the subject of word frequency." The usefulness of such a tool will, however, increase with the study of *Ulysses* itself, as evidenced by the continually growing demand for the *Index*.

—H. MARSHALL McLUHAN

St. Michael College
University of Toronto

Behind the Masque. By Urban P. Nagle,
O.P. McMullen Books, Inc. \$3.50.

Too much of what is being written today on the subject of Catholic Theater and the role of Catholics in the entertainment world is based on little practical knowledge of the theater or of Catholics who are engaged in theater work. Such articles are perhaps inspirational, but of little value. For the most part they are being written for their own sake, to fill up Catholic magazines with so-called "topical" and "pertinent" articles. They succeed only in making the job of the Catholic engaged in such work more difficult, and in strengthening the layman's opinion that the theater is a wicked and worldly place.

Father Nagle's book comes at an opportune time and helps to dispel some of the wispy idealism. Written after the fact, *Behind the Masque* demonstrates the innumerable problems that the Blackfriars faced in founding a theater "under Catholic auspices." Many of these problems were financial. The others were of a spiritual nature, having to do with the aims of a group devoted to Catholic Theater.

The Blackfriars Guild is an organization (now located in New York City) which has been producing plays continuously since 1932. In the introduction to his book, Father Nagle lists five questions which diverse people have asked many times about the Blackfriars: 1) What are priests doing in the theater? 2) How official are you? 3) What are you trying to do here? 4) Now, just what is Catholic Theater and what is a Catholic play? 5) I have a nephew (or niece) who showed great talent in high school dramatics; would you give

him (or her) an opportunity to act with your little group? *Behind the Masque* is the answer to these questions. The nieces and nephews are disposed of simply: "The prodigy registers with us and his (or her) name goes in with those of almost ten thousand other nephews or nieces." As to the other questions, Father Nagle decides not simply to describe the Blackfriars' present operations "explaining its functions and attempting a series of essays on the philosophy behind it," because "that might be stuffy, and you wouldn't have seen it grow." Instead, he chooses—unwisely, I think—to tell his story chronologically, "which is more pleasant to write." The reader, instead of being given the answers, has to search for them. And they are not easy to find.

As a boy, Father Nagle was exposed to theater in indiscriminate doses in Rhode Island, where his father was a theater fireman at the Providence Opera House. As the lights were dimming, young Nagle would hand the usher an imaginary ticket. By prearrangement the usher would deftly tear it in half and the boy would be ushered to an empty seat. Father Nagle says to repay this debt, "We're not too hard on gate crashers if they smile as they go by, keep out of cash customers' seats and don't look as if they got away with it."

At eighteen he decided to become a Dominican. While in the seminary he wrote several plays, tailored for the occasion and the available talent. And he rewrote many, because, as he says: "Even the detached souls in a religious novitate thought that their parts should be fatter." After his ordination he was assigned to Saint Dominic's parish in Washington, D.C., and he immediately began doing plays in the parish hall. It was at this time that he became associated with the Rev. Dr. Thomas Carey, with whom he founded the Blackfriars. When Father Nagle and his Washington Blackfriars did a production of Philip Barry's *Holiday*, they were expelled by the pastor, who vowed that "those

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smoking, swearing, drinking women might not be portrayed on the stage of Saint Dominic's parish."

But the Blackfriars survived by doing plays in any place that might reasonably be called a theater. When Father Nagle was transferred to Providence, he started a chapter of the organization there. It was not until he was transferred to New York to become an editor of the *Holy Name Journal* that the Blackfriars found a more or less permanent home in a walk-up theater on 57th Street. That was in 1940.

Since then they have been giving four plays a year, all originals, each running for approximately four weeks. The Blackfriars are a non-profit organization; they do not pay the actors, and the playwright retains all rights. The box-office receipts usually just manage to cover production costs. Their opening nights are usually covered by the New York papers. The latter half of the book describes these productions and the critics' reactions to them. In some instances a play is described from its conception. Some of the more successful plays are *Career Angel*, *Hoboes in Heaven*, *Lady of Fatima*, and *City of Kings*, the last two written by Father Nagle.

That is the general outline of *Behind the Masque*. In regard to the problems posed in the introduction, Father Nagle is vague, and even contradictory. For example, on page 21 he says: "I sought a very superior type of play." On page 52: "The best reason for doing a comedy is because it is a good thing to laugh and to bring some laughter to others. So we started on *The Drunkard*." Elsewhere he says: "We hoped to build good taste based on sound moral values and right reasoning." And yet he admits that "we descended to what I believe is classically catalogued as high tripe and did McCarthy's *If I Were King*." He says in another place: "If we opened with *Stage Door* it's because we had a cast of thirty actors to begin with and never would have a cast of thirty again."

He berates the Broadway commercial theater for "turning an art form into a business—a sharp business and a big business." But, as he says many times in his book, "the rent had to be paid." He devotes two or three chapters to the difficulties he had with unions and ordinances and licenses, as if they are the fault of the Broadway theater, rather than, if anything, a reflection of our times. If quality will eventually be discovered, by whom will it be discovered? The answer is the New York critics, whether it be art, music, or architecture. As a matter of fact, Father Nagle later expresses his pride that one of his productions (*Career Angel*) was snapped up for commercial production, and that two others were optioned because of the glowing notices of the New York critics. However, *Career Angel* flopped on Broadway, and Father Nagle called it a massacre, his explanation of what happened to the script being both believable and enlightening.

What is Catholic Theater, and what is a Catholic play? In regard to the eviction over *Holiday* and the future of the Blackfriars Father Nagle asked: "Are we to be governed by fundamental morality or by local conventions in this project? . . . Was the schism between the Church and the theater an irremediable one? By that I mean, must drama which is acceptable to Catholics be of a religious nature or on an adolescent level? Might we not grapple with the problems which beset people in the world?" And his answer to these questions was: "We believed, and with pretty good authority, too, that a Catholic could discuss religion, politics, sociology, science, sin—anything under the sun—if he weren't led into wrong doing or wrong thinking in the process. We believed he could attend dramatic performances where these subjects were treated, if the regular safeguards were employed . . . Our particular problem was to spring an adult theater on people who weren't expecting one. We foresaw more obstacles from

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those within the Church than from the outside. We were right."

That statement was far from being the last word that Father Nagle found himself required to make on the problem of what is Catholic Theater. Later, in granting charters to other organizations throughout the country to use the Blackfriar name, Father Nagle says:

So, without attempting to define a Catholic play, either narrowly or broadly, we declared that any play which solved the problems it raised in accordance with Catholic principles and which gave no scandal (in the strict theological meaning of the word) was grist for our mills.

Chapters were required to submit their coming play selections for approval on this basis and we approved our share of innocuous comedies as in-betweens. We were told frequently that audiences in time would prefer serious thought-provoking plays which made them think of eternal verities, but the matter was never proved. We only knew that the chapters did the plays they wanted to do and thought they could sell to their communities.

There is some truth in his implication that there is no such thing as Catholic Theater. The expression, as it has been bandied about today, has become synonymous with either "religious theater" or "inoffensive theater." If one rejects both of these definitions, as Father Nagle does, then the expression becomes meaningless. He prefers "theater under Catholic Auspices." This seems to be begging the question. If we apply the word Catholic to the other arts, imagine trying to decide whether the *Nutcracker Suite* were Catholic music, or if the Empire State Building were a Catholic building.

Although *Behind the Masque* certainly does not contain all the answers, Father Nagle is right when he says on the final page of his book: "I have always felt that anyone who succeeded in building a theater like Blackfriars in New York or anywhere

else would profit by knowing what I have seen throughout the years."

—JOHN D. TUMPANE
University of Notre Dame

Days of a Hireling. By John Gilland
Brunini. Lippincott. \$3.00.

The setting for this novel is Manhattan, that part of which is inhabited by and known to the cultured, even sophisticated, intelligent Catholics intent on some form of Catholic action. It is the same Manhattan over-swarmed by Americans and others who have no firm religious beliefs and few steady motives derived from religious principles. Both groups mingle on the same social level and live on the same level of income. They have interests in common, dealings in business, and are indistinguishable in things that meet the eye but do not penetrate to the mind.

Mr. Brunini writes convincingly of this world of New York in which he has lived for more than twenty years and of which he has been a significant part. Through a reasoned idealism and a quiet but determined zeal, he gave over a business career and the quest for wealth in order to devote his talents to such occupations in Christian literature. He has been an associate editor of *The Commonwealth*, has been the executive director of the Catholic Poetry Society and editor of its bi-monthly periodical, *Spirit*, and a factor in other Catholic literary and cultural movements. He has written an extremely able apologetic book, *Whereon to Stand*, and edited several anthologies of Catholic poems as well as *Stories of Our Century by Catholic Authors* with Francis X. Connolly. His many other occupations have been eclectic, such as being director of the Temple of Religion at the New York World's Fair, and recently as chairman of the Grand Jury investigating a group of Communists. He has lead a celibate life and, like a priest, sought the things of God as against those of Mammon.

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The background of the author through two decades in New York animates the novel and stamps it with authenticity. The story is plotted about Hilary Devoise who, it emerges, was divorced after a young marriage from a woman he never loved, sought marriage with another woman who loved him but helped him keep his fidelity, and finally adhered rigidly to the Catholic doctrine of marriage until death.

The occupation, or rather, avocation, of Hilary Devoise is that of being the mainstay of *The Prospect*, a national Catholic magazine conducted wholly by laymen, being, as occasion demanded, treasurer, manager, editor and director. To this apostolic work so necessary in the balance of the American Church, he devotes far too much of his time and energy, worries far too much, but strives as a man of God with all the powers of his soul and body.

These two threads run through his life, that of his interior struggle to keep himself and his marriage vow intact, that of his external life to keep *The Prospect* solvent and effective. Both these themes have their dramatic elements, their romance, their griefs and struggles and sorrows, and their ultimate triumphs. One reviewer has said, with some superficial relevancy but with no subtle understanding, that this novel should have been wholly a tale of spiritual values or wholly a conflict of business problems in skipping a Catholic periodical. He failed, I believe, to realize how the one merges with the other until they mean the full life of Hilary Devoise, the unfortunate in a wrecked marriage and the fortunate in an idealistic career.

Both of these themes, likewise, provide Mr. Brunini the opportunity to present in a human, thought-provoking manner the truth as well as the beauty of Catholicism. It should not be implied that, for this reason, the novel is heavily burdened with doctrine or slowed by treatises. Rather, the affirmations of Catholic principles and

the portrayals of the Catholic way of life give not only body but a lilting spirit to the narrative. The case of Hilary Devoise is fully illustrative.

This reviewer does not remember another novel in which the central figure is a divorced Catholic who does not remarry. Yet this is a spiritual and material conflict pregnant with complications and problems. By way of contrast and contradiction, by way of affirmation and action, situations which embrace all human emotions naturally develop. Hilary is not preserved from sex and recognizes the joy of marital love and the fatherhood of a family all the more because he was early orphaned. Yet, he adheres to the sacrificial demands of a Catholic life despite temptations and loneliness. In his way, he is a martyr; yet, like all the martyrs who shed their blood, he had steeled himself with faith, he had contented himself in the spirit. And though the flesh overwhelms him in a final crisis of weakness, he rises from his fall to a more exalted comprehension of God.

The well delineated characters revolving around Hilary are those associated with *The Prospect* office, and those of the intimate circle of friends more or less involved in the magazine's progress. Of major influence on him are David Brett, the editor; his non-Catholic wife who is jealous of his Catholicism; and Jean Deniston, who, like so many admirable women, has sacrificed her life for her mother until she is able to make the full oblation to the service of God. Though the variety of the characters is, at times, somewhat confusing, they are well combined in the pattern of Hilary's microcosm.

The story is not thumped out in the staccato prose of this day, nor bared down to the piercing lines of the neon signs. It is written in the leisurely style of the novelist who is more interested in thought than he is in passion. It is an understanding novel, an important addition to the growing number of novels that are

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Catholic, that are expertly plotted, that involve sin without exploiting it, that portray virtue as an attainable factor in ordinary life.

—FRANCIS X. TALBOT, S.J.

Christopher Fry: An Appreciation. By Derek Stanford. The British Book Centre. \$2.75.

A Sleep of Prisoners. By Christopher Fry. Oxford University Press. \$2.

Dissatisfied with such critical assessment as the plays of Christopher Fry have received thus far in England, Derek Stanford here attempts his own. He does not merely welcome a verse dramatist whose language delights dulled ears and makes its meanings readily accessible. Nor does he simply rejoice at the sense of wonder and joy the poet imparts. This is a full-dress affair, and he means to be thorough. He examines all Fry's published work—three comedies, two religious festival plays, a tragedy, and a translation. (Fry's latest play, *A Sleep of Prisoners*, had not yet been produced or published.) He undertakes to place the plays with reference to English drama, to determine what common and unique qualities they may have, and to "elucidate the imaginative metaphysic present in the poet."

The result, for those who admire Fry and appreciate his value to the contemporary stage, but who cannot match Mr. Stanford's extravagant enthusiasm, may be both wearing and embarrassing. For more than two hundred pages, and without ever raising his voice except to scold Fry's critics, he manages to sing critical alleluias unflaggingly; he reaches a climax with the word "genius," and ends with a chapter "defiantly" subtitled "The Triumph of Fry."

At times the going is heavy. Mr. Stanford says pretentious things like this: "To understand Fry one must learn to understand the final paradoxical nature of truth." He can be laughably pompous, as when, in discussing *A Phoenix Too Frequent*, he de-

scribes the Ephesian widow's decision to entomb herself with her husband's corpse as "... a rationalism of her instinctive wish to die ... rooted ... deeply in the darkness of her subconscious." And his technique is sometimes muzzy. The chapter entitled "Portrait of a Poet," for example, gives neither a clear impression of the man nor useful biographical data.

Since he admits to only two defects in Fry's plays—namely, prolixity and sentimentality—Mr. Stanford is inclined to regard those who find additional defects not as well-intentioned critics, but as purblind detractors. If we think the plays are sometimes deficient in plot, it is because we have "a mechanical notion of plot" and mistakenly believe there is only one kind of plot-development—the kind found, say, in the plays of Pinero, with their reliance on cause and effect, their "hints of predestination." "In the plays of Pinero, plot is developed logically, whereas in Fry's plays, the development is symphonic." This sounds very impressive, but just what does it mean? Mr. Stanford explains: "In other words, each play contains a number of leit-motifs or themes (in the musical sense of that term) which appear, reappear and combine." Even if we keep in mind that he is using the word "theme" not in its orthodox sense but as a substitute for "plot" and "sub-plot," we still wish to know whether these symphonic combinations develop towards a satisfying conclusion.

Fry's two best plots, it seems to me, are to be found in *A Phoenix Too Frequent* and *The Firstborn*. They are mechanical; that is, they develop logically to satisfying conclusions. It is no reflection on Fry to suggest that this may be so because Petronius provided the plot and characters of the former, and the Book of Exodus the framework and denouement of the latter. Fry wisely respected the Roman's acrid fable for what it is, one of the classic plots of all time: he kept the story intact while cunningly altering its tone and thereby disproved utterly Lessing's contention that the

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story, if enacted, would be so revolting that no audience would accept it.

It is interesting that Mr. Stanford, like this reviewer, considers *The Firstborn* Fry's masterpiece. Moses, as tragic hero, spelling out God's doom on Egypt to free his people, spurred Fry to his most ambitious efforts. They resulted in his toughest, most dramatic poetry, the most real characters he had yet devised, and a tragedy of the requisite magnitude. Here the characters are not "humors," charming conceits, or metaphysical attitudes. They exist, not only on stage, but also in the mind and *apart from the poet's verse*. Stage characters can, of course, succeed quite well without enjoying that independent existence that convinces us of their reality: the mannequins of *The Importance of Being Earnest* are a case in point, as is the dustman, Alfred Doolittle, in *Pygmalion*. But Mr. Stanford discusses Fry's characters as if they all enjoyed such three-dimensionality, and, ironically enough, it is only his eagerness to exalt *The Firstborn* that tricks him into an unconscious admission: "If the comedies can be spoken of in terms of a pierrot-puppet show, *The Firstborn* suggests itself to us as a dramatic portrait gallery." The irony does not end there. The play has never been released for production in the United States, because his masterpiece is apparently the only one of his plays with which Fry is really dissatisfied, and so he has withdrawn it for major revisions.

To return to the only charges Mr. Stanford will permit against his idol: prolixity and sentimentality. The prolixity, he says, does not lie in the structure of the plays, but in "a certain Rostandian effulgence of expression" that sometimes "slows up the action a little or retards the proper flowering of suspense." He is quick to add, in defense, that we must differentiate between "... the rhetoric of argument ... such as we meet with in the staged debates of Shaw, and that of emotional self-interpretation such as distinguishes the plays of Fry." And he says, rather con-

fusingly, "In Fry, poetry and drama are not at war; the first diminishing the sense of situation, the second detracting from the beauties of speech." It is easy to see how stage bustle might detract from the beauties of speech, but it is hard to see how *drama* could.

But sentimentality is the graver fault, Mr. Stanford feels. He cites only two small instances, which, for him, are the worse, because Fry also resorted to coincidence "... in order to create the opportunities for sentimental passages." He finds one such example in *Venus Observed*. "Edgar's exclamation, 'God be praised, / The sun again,' as he looks out of the observatory window at the end of the eclipse, whilst Perpetua stands radiant in the open doorway, is another example of this maneuver. This last, we may feel, is just a little mechanical."

Mechanical? It is simply a "built-up entrance" and very much of the theater. It is no more mechanical than Ibsen's careful and effective preparation for the entrance of Hilda Wangen in *The Master Builder*. Just as Solness is predicting that his good luck will turn some day, when the younger generation comes knocking at his door: "Then there's an end of Halvard Solness," and Hilda's fateful knock is heard. This is the sort of thing we go to the theater for; and the fact that Fry, whether genius or not, can give it to us, does more than all Mr. Stanford's praise to convince us Fry is a born dramatist.

A Sleep of Prisoners, Fry's latest play, returns in spirit to the two religious festival pieces, *The Boy With a Cart* and *Thor, With Angels*. But it is quite unlike them or any of his other works. Fry refuses to repeat himself. Each of his plays seems to proceed from fresh vision and an eagerness for technical experiment, just as it differs widely from its fellows in locale, characters, and mood.

In this case, the locale is a church. (For some reason, Fry has stipulated that the play must be presented in an actual church.)

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The characters are four prisoners of war who have been locked up in the church in enemy territory. The mood is a nervy combination of friction and nightmare. Private David King and Private Peter Able rasp each other's nerves until David flies at Peter's throat. The other two men part them, and all four subside into dream-filled sleep. In each of three dream sequences involving incidents from the Bible, David kills—or almost kills—Peter: first, as Cain killing Abel; next, as King David causing the death of his son Absalom; then, as Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac. In the final episode, we see three of the prisoners as Shadrac, Meshac and Abednego, and the fourth as the angel who delivered them from the fiery furnace. The prisoners awaken from their visions, talk briefly, bed down again, and the play ends.

The use of a framework, and the shuttling from reality to dream, are new devices for Fry. How quickly and easily an audience may grasp the characters and situation of each dream is a question. But at one point, at least, in coming out of such a sequence, Fry exploits the transition from dream to reality with brilliant and shocking effect. At the end of the dream about King David and Absalom, a whistle sounds, and in the beam of a flashlight we see Absalom hanging from the pulpit, raked by machine-gun fire.

The nightmarish repetition of the central episode in various guises is reinforced by occasional distortions of language of a kind new to Fry, but reminiscent of James Joyce: "Sorrow, Adam, stremely sorrow." ". . . For God knows howling." "Police on earth. Aggression is the better part of Allah," and the mocking use of nursery rhyme. In general, the poetry is less a matter of self-contained thoughts than in previous plays; it is more dependent on the situation and the characters' emotional progression. There are vivid figures, but they occur sparingly; the rhythms are conversational, broken and abrupt. The final dream in the fiery furnace rises to a great

affirmation of faith in which diction and emotion attain thrilling intensity.

A Sleep of Prisoners again demonstrates what Mr. Stanford calls Fry's "gift for the efficacious kick-off, a flair for the brisk and stylish start; the art of rapidly generating a dominant atmosphere or mood." But we are barely introduced to the four prisoners of war and to their conflict before we are transported into the dream sequences. And in the course of them, we do not see the prisoners develop. In the end, we are brought to earth with a bump, because these men whom we know only slightly have had no chance to resolve their conflict on the plane of reality. It has been resolved for them in a dream. The simple fact is that *A Sleep of Prisoners* is a short play partly because it is an incomplete one. The reader regretfully echoes Peter's lines in the play:

"Show me an ending great enough
To hold the passion of this beginning
And raise me to it."

Even so, *A Sleep of Prisoners* is well worth your while. You ought to read it—and see it, too, if you get the chance.

—HUGH DICKINSON

Loyola University

Newman's University: Idea and Reality.

By Fergal McGrath, S.J. Longmans, Green. \$7.00.

It is Newman the theologian and philosopher who is best known on the Continent. In America we know him principally as a literary man and an educator, *The Idea of a University* being the work most familiarly associated with his name. It is unfortunate that the central theological preoccupation of the great Oxford convert is neglected in this country, although the books of Father Benard and Father Flanagan have done much to remedy this neglect. However, with the publication of Father McGrath's *Newman's University: Idea and Reality*, our understanding of the educational contribution of Cardinal Newman is immeasurably increased.

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Father McGrath's volume at once becomes indispensable for a thorough study of Newman's classic on university education as well as for a lively picture of Newman as an educational practitioner. The description of *The Idea of a University* as the "only standard treatise on university education" in the English tongue is perhaps overstated when one considers such outstanding recent contributions as Moberly's *Crisis in the University*, the Harvard Report on General Education, or Hutchins' *The Higher Learning in America*, to mention but a few. But none of these works is an assured classic and every important book on higher education that appears is inevitably measured by Newman's famous discourses.

In *The Idea* Newman addressed himself to two large themes: 1) the place of theology in university education, and 2) the validity of liberal as contrasted with purely professional education. The continuing significance of these topics is attested to by dozens of books besides the three named above, including the currently controversial *God and Man at Yale*. In fact, the volume and vigor of educational debate during the past twenty years makes one think that Newman's arguments are having a greater impact today than they did a century ago.

But we would be making a serious mistake if we thought *The Idea* to be Newman's complete and final statement on the nature and scope of university education. Every book has a context, and it is in showing us the remote and immediate, the political and ecclesiastical, the national and personal context of Newman's Dublin discourses on education that Father McGrath performs a truly scholarly service. When Newman was anxious as to how his lectures were being received, one of the Oratorians, Father Gordon, reassured him by saying, "You are *writing* for the world and for posterity, though speaking to an audience." The reader a century later needs the converse reminder that Newman was

speaking to an audience, while writing for the world and posterity. Many of the beauties as well as the problems of the book are understood only by knowing the audience Newman was trying to influence.

For example, a climactic sentence towards the conclusion of the masterful introductory discourse, "Peter knows no distinction of races in his ecumenical work," must be read as a delicate plea to the Irish Catholics to accept obediently and cooperatively an Englishman sent to them with the approbation of the Holy See. Again, Newman must have had in mind certain of the Irish clergy and laity who were cool towards the proposal for "impractical" liberal education when in the discourse on "Knowledge Its Own End" he held up the Roman Cato as one who "despised that refinement or enlargement of mind of which he had no experience."

But more important than the illumination it throws on individual passages of *The Idea of a University* is the understanding Father McGrath's book supplies of the whole approach and tone of these lectures, which are highly philosophical and surely do not constitute a complete Catholic philosophy of education. How are we to explain, for instance, that the Anglican Newman, in criticizing the secularistic tendency he discerned in Sir Robert Peel's educational proposals, should say that "Christianity, and nothing short of it, must be made the element and principle of education;" whereas the Catholic Newman in his formal addresses on education could insist that "it is as real a mistake to burden it [liberal knowledge] with virtue or religion as with the mechanical arts"? Some have claimed that Newman's educational theory was not thoroughly Catholic because of such statements in *The Idea*. But such a judgment could only be made by taking the controversial sentences out of the total context of Newman's writing and out of the actual context of their composition.

Newman feared, certainly with some justice, though in the event his fears seem

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to have been somewhat exaggerated, that important people connected with the projected Catholic University, particularly Archbishop Cullen, wanted a narrow ecclesiastical type of institution like a seminary rather than a truly liberal university. And therefore he deliberately and with great intellectual integrity insisted upon the enlargement of the human mind as the specific and validating purpose of a university. This stress upon the "bare idea" of a university gives some passages of the discourses an emphasis that can easily be misconstrued. Furthermore, all concerned with Catholic education must regret that another occasion, or different circumstances in the present occasion, did not evoke from Newman a development of the idea of a *Catholic* university. But a perusal of Father McGrath's book makes clear why Newman proceeded as he did and why he failed to say some of the things one would expect from the pen of this great religious thinker.

Father McGrath's intimate picture of Newman as a prospective and finally a functioning university rector fills out one of the hitherto shadowy periods of his life. Precisely because the "Reality" is not nearly so well known as the "Idea," this account of the organization and operation of the Catholic University under Newman's leadership is an important contribution to the ever-swelling literature on the great Cardinal; and the correspondence, memoranda, plans and accomplishments of Newman in launching the new institution do much to complement the incomplete version of his philosophy of education set down in the Dublin lectures.

We are first amazed at Newman's dogged perseverance in the plan to organize the University through two and a half years of procrastination, obstruction, and silence on the part of Archbishop Cullen and other Irish authorities. When he was finally installed as rector, he had just five months to assemble a faculty, equip a school, arrange a curriculum, and gather a student

body. Newman tried to draw the best minds among English-speaking Catholics to his faculty. Brownson, Dollinger, Manning, and W. G. Ward are among those whom he approached or thought of approaching for this purpose. His early faculty contained such men as Aubrey de Vere, T. W. Allies, Henry Wilberforce, John Hungerford Pollen, and Matthew Arnold's brother, Thomas.

During the four years of his rectorship Newman established a medical school and an engineering school, equipped a chemical laboratory, tried to start an institute of practical science or polytechnical institute, founded two collegiate journals, and affiliated five secondary schools with the University in an effort to raise the quality of pre-collegiate education. While these large administrative operations were going forward, he was not aloof from immediate practical tasks. He was busy "carving for thirty hungry youths," setting up a billiard table in a stable on the University property to keep the students from frequenting Dublin's "billiard saloons," sitting with de Vere when he was stricken with "scarlatina," and handling disciplinary matters with a forbearance that irked the stern Archbishop Cullen. In his first annual report as rector, Newman spoke thus of discipline: "It is easy enough to lay down the law and to justify it, to make your own rule and keep it; but it is quite a science, I may say, to maintain a persevering gentle oversight, to use a minute discretion, to adapt your treatment to the particular case, to go just as far as you safely may with each mind, and no further, and to do all this with no selfish ends, with no sacrifice of sincerity and frankness, and with no suspicion of partiality."

The student of Newman and the student of educational theory will enjoy and profit from reading *Newman's University: Idea and Reality*. Father McGrath takes his place with Wilfrid Ward as one of those whose names must be permanently associated with Newman. It is Newman the

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educator whom Father McGrath presents, and he does so with a discernment and wisdom that make his volume more than a mere narrative. Particularly just is this summary he gives of Newman's position as an educator:

His writings are totally free from that messianic note that disfigures the writings of all modern educationists from Rousseau to John Dewey. Newman never appears as a herald announcing a new age, and consigning to oblivion the work of his predecessors. Rather, he accepts the fundamental truth that education is both a theoretical science and an empirical art, so that the true educationist, however firmly wedded to his principles, will be only too glad to profit by the experiments of preceding ages, when it comes to the determining of the actual content of his teaching, and of his actual methods.

—CHARLES F. DONOVAN, S.J.

Boston College

More Poems. By Eileen Duggan. Macmillan. \$1.75.

This is the New Zealand poet's third volume to appear in America. Since the *Poems* of 1937 and the *New Zealand Poems* of 1940, Miss Duggan has seen war in the South Pacific and has watched with dismay our counterfeit peace. Both experiences have made her forsake more completely "the republic of a dream" and kindled in her a kind of holy indignation that transcends grief and journeys into reality with a new resolve: "Where the sly and the savage are thick / Let the truth fly." Thus the book is less a continuation than an enlargement, a restatement of her plea for a return to the old simplicities, with a new militancy and comprehension. Two poems carry the title "Truth." The first is the uncompromising creed that there is no midpoint between truth and treason, though pity wrestles with the poet's fury till she longs for the strength of the bee, which can "give the whole sting and die." In the other poem, she advocates the gathering of all one's powers to slay the enemy of

truth, so that one's body becomes the sling and one's life the stone: for the youth fallen in battle was "David to a world." This is the shining imagery of dedication which characterized the earlier poems. Eileen Duggan has lost none of her power to "stab us into wakefulness" with the controlled intellectual image which has made reviewers compare her to John Donne. Actually, she owes little to any one influence: her originality is unquestioned. Her art is disciplined, seeking the strong rather than the ornate, her sense of connotation very strong. Like her countrywoman, Katherine Mansfield, she relies almost wholly on the power of suggestion, on that "mental reverberation" which gives true poetry its enduring quality. If her images ever miss fire, it is that they hit too near the center, where starkness becomes obscurity.

In "A Text in Isais" she uses the scriptural allegory of seven women pursuing one man to illustrate the barrenness of the aftermath of war, when "the future is slain in its sires." To any nation—which she defines as a "delta of memories"—this is "the marrow of woe." In another poem she uses the figure of Samson's flaming fox, who runs raging around the globe setting it aflame, till "tropic and pole have but one climate, fire!" But her message is ultimately one of hope, for "Though lids seem sewn, / Gloom is not total, nor is vision gone." But she insists that love alone "can douse the conflagration," and though she sings not of extinction but eclipse, she admits that in this day when youth expects no more than death, it takes a great detachment to believe earth a star.

Eileen Duggan rises to fine irony in an address to an opportunist which she entitles "Have No Fear!" Always and everywhere, "whatever factions triumph," he will be safe, and like the salamander, will survive even in the midst of fire. She prays for simplicity and passion to "write not of, but to and for, man," in these

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"our dreadful days." Occasionally, she breaks through to a simplicity and realism that touch the colloquial: an American soldier compares the still, high, peaceful stars of home, which saunter into view, with the stars of the South Pacific, that "hang on the signal and rip through like marines."

Her old mastery of paradox is again at work in poems like "Aspiration," where distance is power in its own right, and the goal stable "merely by being far" where the "between is never idle," and "the gap is nimble, too." An airman hopes that speed may at last "fly itself past speech," and "so by motion win to quiet."

More explicitly religious in content are "Contrast" and "Mediatix." The first treats of the slow, undulating journey of the Magi, "all very leisurely, as demand great distances," and compares them with the shepherds who "hurtled headlong, helter-skelter, wildfoot, down the crag-side, / As fast as instinct," and without calculation, knew the way to the manger. The poem on Our Lady compares her to the moon that "shakes the sea-pan with the tides" and is "more than lunar over hearts / Which blacken in despair."

Some question may be raised as to the advisability of words like "axolotl" and "parasalene," side by side with "pledget" and "grue," or the tall, upstanding "im-pavid." But their use is due less to a searching after precision than to that extraordinary union of the abstract and the concrete which make Eileen Duggan's images so inevitable: a river "runs in a supreme endorsement" and is "a silver signature across the plains." Night is a "still caesura / Which breaks a line in two." The airman moves against a "panther-stare" of searchlights. Purple "that preens for princes, aches for Lent." Trees must be made to "shrug off towns as sea-gulls toss off rain." Stags stand at bay "like the displaced." Finally, "The great statute which we know as winter, unsoftened by any Spring amendment, was full enforced."

There is the universality of authentic poetry in these lines, and the deep emotional concern for a return to truth and charity which transports us by implication rather than invitation to that far country where the "soul calls up its far reserves of light."

—SISTER ST. MIRIAM OF
THE TEMPLE, C.N.D.

Notre Dame College
Ottawa

Selected Poems of Thomas Merton. Intr. by Robert Speaight. London: Hollis and Carter.

To the swiftly increasing numbers of foreign editions of "Mertoniana"—the *Seven Storey Mountain*, English, French, Italian and German editions; *Seeds of Contemplation*, English, French and Italian editions; *Waters of Siloe*, English, French, Italian and Dutch editions; *What Is Contemplation?*, English *Pater Noster* series, and a deluxe brochure of fourteen poems done into Italian by Augusto Guido—Robert Speaight, British critic and actor, has recently added a volume of *Selected Poems*. Beyond New Directions' reprinting of Merton's first volume, *Thirty Poems* (1944), now a collectors' item, in *A Man in the Divided Sea* (1946), Merton's second volume of poetry, Mr. Speaight's is the first assembling and selection of the poetry to date.

In the selection there are sixty-six poems in all, chronologically arranged under title of the respective volume in which they were first printed, with the exception that the editor does not distinguish the fifteen poems, beginning with "Lent in a Time of War," selected from the first book and reprinted in the second. Mr. Speaight's is an interesting, comprehensive, and judicious selection, including fifteen poems of Merton's first book, twenty-four of the second, fifteen of the third, and twelve of the fourth. The last poem, "Sports Without Blood" (A Letter to Dylan Thomas), did not appear in any

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one of the published volumes. Were one to make a still broader division of the poems into the poet's pre-Trappist and Trappist poetry—that written before and that written after his entrance into the monastery—one would find an almost evenly balanced selection: thirty-five of the former, and thirty-one of the latter division. One acquainted with the original manuscripts of these various poems would discover that only three of those selected from *A Man in the Divided Sea* were written at Gethsemani. These, with the poems of the two remaining volumes, *Figures for an Apocalypse* and *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, comprise an almost perfectly balanced collection both for appreciation and critical appraisal.

Among the early poems are those of classical theme such as "Ariadne," "The Greek Women" and "Calypso's Island," and those of tropic setting whose technique is distinguished by a cascade of sparkling, even startling metaphor. There is "Tropics," where

Guards on the Penal Island
Converging, mad as murder, in the
swearing cane,
Arrest the fourfooted wind.

At six o'clock, exactly,
The day explodes like a bomb,
And it is night.

There is the "Fugitive:"

Planted, like bulbs, in the wet earth
of sleep
His eyes had started to sprout:
Sea-changing in his murk of dream-
ing blood,
And shining in his fathoms of am-
bition,
Bones had begun to turn to money.

One is pleased to find that the selections from *Figures for an Apocalypse* include some of the best of Merton's Cistercian poems, whether set against the backdrop of his own Gethsemani, or the primitive, first foundations of Clairvaux and Rievaulx where

The viewless wind came walking on
the land like a Messiah
Spending the thin scent of the russet
heather,
Lauding the flowering gorse and the
green brook:

So Rievaulx raised her white cathed-
ral in the wilderness
Arising in her strength and newness
beautiful as Judith.

It is significant that of the seventeen poems that comprise Merton's fourth volume, *The Tears of the Blind Lions*, Mr. Speaight has included twelve, besides remarking in his perceptive forward that in his opinion the poems of this latest book are "incontestably the best." Certainly their technique has tightened, their symbolism sharpened and become more austere, and the individual image sparks radiance from the inner poetic substance more swiftly and penetratingly than those of the earlier poems. One is especially grateful to the editor for including that arresting and timeless poem, "Christopher Columbus." Also, there is a fine representation of poems concerned with the essence of prayer, such as "Song: Contemplation," "A Psalm," or the defence of the secluded and contemplative life in "The Quickening of St. John the Baptist." One misses however, the "Hymn for the Feast of Duns Scotus," which is one of Merton's peaks both in theme and expression. Still one can be partly compensated by the happy inclusion of "The Captives—A Psalm," where in a hurled anathema Merton sifts the total purport of his theme:

May my bones burn and ravens eat
my flesh
If I forget thee, contemplation!
May language perish from my tongue
If I do not remember thee, O Sion,
city of vision,
Whose heights have windows finer
than the firmament
When night pours down her canticles
And peace sings on thy watchtowers
like the stars of Job.

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One cannot but admit a shade of puzzlement at the implication thrice made in Mr. Speaight's forward that they might be written "... in order to put Gethsemani on the map." It would seem quite incongruous that the Trappist superiors, possessed of a wisdom not always found in high places, not only to recognize and appreciate Father Merton's gift, but to urge him to write (even against his will), should be so lacking in integrity as to require him to prostitute his art to propaganda, even for so worthy a cause as vocations to Gethsemani. Merton's personal feeling as regards the purpose of his poetry—in fact, of all his writing—is patently clear in "Poet to His Book," which Mr. Speaight includes:

Go, stubborn talker,
Find you a station on the loud
world's corners,
And try there, (if your hands be
clean) your length of patience:
Use there the rhythms that upset my
silences,
And spend your pennyworth of prayer
There in the clamor of the Christless
avenues:
And try to ransom some one prisoner
Out of those walls of traffic, out of
the wheels of that unhappiness!

Selected Poems of Thomas Merton is a must in any collection of modern poets, but they are poems that, as Robert Speaight insists, one "must enter into the conditions and climate of their composition" to understand. For, "Gethsemani, like Little Gidding, is a place where 'prayer has been valid,' and if we desire to taste the fruits of it, we must go upon our knees."

—SISTER M. THÉRÈSE, S.D.S.

Alexander Pope: Catholic Poet. By Francis Beauchesne Thornton. Pellegrini and Cudahy. \$4.75.

We did not have a full-length study of Alexander Pope from the pen of a competent Catholic writer until Father Thornton wrote this book. The denigration which

had overtaken the character of the poet, and the romantic prejudice which had dismissed his poetry, are, it is true, being dissipated, but, except for the present work, by scholars without full sympathy for his religion. Neither Miss Sitwell nor Professor Sherburn nor Mr. Ault realized, as has the writer under consideration, to what an extent the disabilities placed on Catholics in eighteenth century England explain the poet's actions, e.g. the cautious and dissimulating language of his religious affirmations, his dealings with publishers, his relations with his friends. Nor had these and other scholars been aware, or made their readers aware, of the extent of Pope's knowledge of the Catholic tradition in religion and philosophy.

Take the familiar case of the *Essay on Man*. This poem had, until Father Thornton studied it, been treated as the expression of deism, and its sources looked for in Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, Locke, et al. Even the unusually well-informed editor of the Twickenham edition of the poem, which recently appeared (1951), missed the full weight of Catholic thought in it. Father Thornton, in his Oxford dissertation on the *Essay*, the findings of which he has incorporated into this book, has worked out the sources of the thought of the poem, and discovered the coincidence of its doctrine with the teachings of natural theology from St. Thomas to Fénelon, with a strong admixture of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth, "one of Bolingbroke's most intense and purple hatreds."

Father Thornton's treatment of the *Essay on Man* is, indeed, the one great original contribution which this book makes to Pope studies, and it was worth publishing by itself. This reviewer hopes that the author will soon make his full and detailed monograph available to scholars.

A good book on Pope needs a man who is willing and able to present the religious situation in eighteenth century England and one who is at the same time a student of the literary and social scene of the time.

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Father Thornton qualifies. He does not, however, "whitewash" Pope or the Catholic milieu. Uninformed Catholics who simply put a pious ideal in place of historic fact will discover in the first chapter of the book a rather surprising revelation of the Catholic scene in seventeenth and eighteenth century England—divisions, instability of authority, abuses, dwindling numbers. Pope was all his life under a cloud not only of legal penalties and civil disabilities (he was forced to vest his property in the hands of non-Catholic cousins, was taxed double, could not own a coach or live in London), but of invincible ignorance in matters of theology. It is amazing, under the conditions, that he thought and wrote as consistently as he did and that he persevered as doggedly as he did in his religion.

The author says in his preface: "My task, except for the new research on the *Essay on Man* and Pope's religion, has been one of integration and interpretation." This is in the main true, though the religion of Pope is so interwoven with his character and even his work, that the poet emerges almost as a new man from the study. Thus Thornton finds *Eloisa to Abelard* "rich with the stored harvest of much spiritual reading and contemplation" and the *Essay on Man*, as we have already noted, a brilliant recreation in poetic form of traditional natural theology. The last mentioned work, the author reminds us, was not suspected at the time of deistic implications by anybody until the Swiss theologian Crousaz, working from a bad French translation, found it heretical. In France the Jesuit critic Tourmemine spoke well of it, and the Church never condemned the poem. "It was not knowledge of philosophies that made the *Essay on Man*," says Thornton, "but the love of God and the optimistic heart of a Christian." The similarly defamed *Universal Prayer*, according to the author, has strong affinities with a prayer of St. Francis Xavier's which Pope himself had translated.

Thornton makes no attempt to excuse the deceptions and mystifications the poet practiced, notably in the publishing of his correspondence; he points out that "there was nothing in Pope's religion which would permit or condone the deceit he practised." "There seems to be at the back of the minds of some kindly and honest men a sneaking suspicion that there were 'principles of casuistry' which would permit Pope a world of 'mental reservations' in his dealings with those who were not Catholic or who were inimical to the Church. Such suspicions are unjustified, because the *science of casuistry* is an open study: every volume is available in public libraries for those interested . . ."

From the point of view of literary criticism as such, the best chapter in the book is perhaps the twelfth, where Thornton institutes an interesting and valid comparison between the art of Pope and that of Goya. There were many similarities in the lives of both men. "The two artists depended for survival upon their luck and cunning. They were insatiable observers." The comparison goes deeper:

In swiftness of execution Pope and Goya are also worthy of comparison. They had that consummate dexterity of long-practiced genius which etched the "Caprichos" in a year, or produced one of the imitations of Horace in two mornings. Here is none of that tortured nineteenth-century agony which seems forever reaching for the word not there but to be found somewhere in the distant galaxies of the far-reaching imagination. With Pope and Goya, to conceive was to achieve.

Those who would attempt to judge Goya by the "Caprichos," "Proverbs," and "Disasters of War," or by his Swiftian fancies painted on the walls of his house, must remain always in the basement of their Prado. The marvelous children, the nobles and royal personages who blaze in sunshine, in inflamed pigment, and in joyous verve of line (always joyous verve of line) in the upper gallery, must be left to the inquisition of the light alone.

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Of Pope the same must be said. To concentrate on the gloomy aspects of the *Dunciad*, the "screaming fury" of Sporus or Atossa, leaves to the "silver bookworms" that endless shining series of portraits in which joyous verve of line works its immortal magic.

The reviewer must not forget to mention the wonderfully appropriate epigraph which the author found for his chapter on the *Essay on Man*. It is from *Richard II*, Act V, scene i:

Hath Bolingbroke

Deposed thine intellect? hath he been
In thy heart?

The book is, all in all, a mellow and beautiful study of Pope, with a new focus and a new perspective. The lineaments of the man and the poet stand out clearly against a carefully authenticated background. The critics will have to reconsider some of their premises when they come to formulate their judgments on this volume.

I have said nothing of the style. Readable, graceful, and abounding in original insights, the book is informed with the growing literature on the man and the poet. A long overdue performance, capitably rendered.

—VICTOR M. HAMM

Marquette University

A Catholic Book Chronicle: The Story of P. J. Kenedy & Sons. By Robert C. Healey. P. J. Kenedy & Sons.

Publishing firms are like maids in that they come and go. Not many of them live long enough to count a few gray hairs at a hundred years of age. It is something in the nature of a marvel that the publishing house of P. J. Kenedy should be counting the hairs after 125 years of continuous existence: it is still more remarkable that the counting involves no gray hairs at all. Roger Healey has told this saga of publishing in a manner which combines good taste and judicious understatement. The firm of Kenedy was founded on racy joke books

and books of song. These were about all the consolation the Irish had in the years around 1826. From such raffish beginnings the business went on growing with the fortunes of the Catholic Church in America. Prayer books, Bibles, books of ceremonies and instruction, *The Catholic Directory*—the Kenedys took them all in their stride and went on to continued success with each generation of the family. This charming little gift book, though it looks back, is really a souvenir of a bright future.

—FRANCIS BEAUCHESNE THORNTON

Guilt. By Caryll Houselander. Sheed & Ward. \$3.75.

This is a book about guilt and about everything else in the world. As studded with abruptly ultimate epigrams as Pascal's *Pensées*, the chapters range the jungles of abnormal psychology, explore the heights of sainthood, and find time to offer some wonderfully perceptive advice on the importance of nourishing children with gory fairy tales.

And yet, for all her dartings about, Caryll Houselander always recurs to her main subject, of which she shows a depth of understanding that makes most psychology treatises ring with a brittle sound. The sense of guilt, as she demonstrates, is not simply an inconvenient psychological state, to be conjured away by reading a peace-of-mind book or reclining on a psychoanalyst's couch. It can lead in two directions: towards the disintegration of the neurotic or the constantly growing integration of the potential saint. It is as ambiguous as a queasy sensation in the pit of the stomach, which—as Pepys pointed out in his diary—can be produced equally well by a rough sea voyage or the sound of beautiful music.

Her point is illustrated by thumbnail sketches of a grab-bag of saints, criminals, and artists—Loeb and Leopold, Irma Grese, Benedict Joseph Labre, Franz Kafka, to name a few of them. And yet—as I

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finished the book—I was aware that all the concern with guilt and its endless ramifications was only the backdrop to something else. Caryll Houselander's major concern is actually holiness. The book is a prose hymn to saintliness and the saints, and of course, the One in whom the saints coinhere. The taste of holiness is strong here, sharp and pungent, and despite the ostensible purpose of *Guilt*, I recommend it most of all as one of the best manuals I have ever read on how-to-avoid-not-being-a-saint.

—CHAD WALSH

Beloit College

Art and Beauty. By Maurice de Wulf.
Trans. by Sister M. Gonzaga Udell, O.P.
Herder Book Company. \$3.00.

A Philosophy of Form. By E. I. Watkin.
Sheed and Ward. \$6.00.

Philosophy of the Arts. By Morris Weitz.
Harvard University Press. \$4.00.

The Nature of Art. By Arthur Little, S.J.
Longmans, Green and Co. \$2.00.

M. de Wulf's book was written shortly after the close of the first world war, and has, I believe, a value primarily in pointing up a type of scholasticism which happily has virtually disappeared from the historical scene. Whatever M. de Wulf's reputation as a student of philosophy or history—and the present work makes questionable even that—he nevertheless seems frequently to display an attitude of mind which is inimical to the intellectual life. To read this book one might presume that scholasticism had for its theses a certitude as extensive as that of the Faith. It is true that a Christian philosophy, as M. Gilson declared two years ago in his address to the International Congress of Scholastic Philosophers, must be brought under the influence of Christian theology in order to receive full illumination; however, this influence will be more definite in the immediate field of metaphysics and—in the light of the

Incarnation—of psychology. But it would be an error to see this influence as direct or extensive in esthetics, which is a derived science.

The author's spirit of self-confirmed infallibility grates rather harshly among many Christians who are not so quick to accuse divergent thinkers of intellectual fraud or incompetence. His brand of scholasticism gives the impression of being an achieved, closed and narrow system of thought. This attitude is in striking contrast to the serene objectivity of the Thomism which is exemplified in the works of Maritain, whose *Art et Scolastique*, by the way, was composed the same year as the present work.

That this book has been so generally accepted indicates how widespread in certain circles is that ghetto spirit which sees no good in a thinker unless he is of one's own school or sect. The oversimplification of many non-Christian philosophers' esthetic theories, as presented in this book, seems little more than injustice. Taine's theory of environmental influences, the *Einfühlung*, the leisure theory of Herbert Spencer, all of these are so completely demolished that dwellers in the spiritual ghettos must have wondered how such "absurd" hypotheses could ever have been maintained. The frequent derogatory references to Kant, or the following remark on Benedetto Croce as one "who passes for an intellectual in Italy," betray that idolatry of one's own school which cannot but be detrimental in the free search after truth. Thus, we are not surprised when M. de Wulf concludes his dissertation with the following historical insight: "We must turn back to the thirteenth century, the era in which Western civilization and Western philosophy produced the most savory fruits, in order to view an esthetic elaboration worthy of arresting the attention of the historian."

As for the metaphysical considerations on beauty, they have been expressed with greater accuracy and brevity by Fathers

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Phelan, Gilby, Farron, and Callahan, to mention only four who adhere closely to the Thomistic tradition.

Because E. I. Watkin's *Philosophy of Form* is a revision, I will consider only two aspects of it: It is a significant work because it presents scholasticism under a guise that appeals to the contemplative spirit of thinkers in our age. It has an even greater importance because Mr. Watkin is one of the two influential contemporary Christian philosophers to have been affected by the teachings of the great German thinker, Peter Wust. Both Gabriel Marcel and E. I. Watkin have taken from Wust the notion that philosophy begins in a spirit of wonderment and terminates in a participation in the joy of being. This emphasis on the *Daseinsfreude* offers, perhaps, the best foundation for a Christian philosophy which will stress the existential insight of the uniqueness of the person in its relation to the objective world.

The section of Mr. Watkin's book on art, which is what is of primary concern in this review, presents the traditional theory that esthetic contemplation consists in the apprehension of significant form: "that is to say, the inner form, the idea expressed and signified by outer form." The controversy that this conception has raised will be considered in the reviews of the two following books.

Professor Weitz' *Philosophy of the Arts* is an attempt to resolve the perennial confusion concerning the relation of form and content. He rejects the traditional notion that content is the terms and form the organization of them, on the grounds that such a statement is both inadequate descriptively and that it creates insoluble difficulties. His own theory conceives content as all the expressive elements of a work of art organically related to each other, and form as the organic unification of these expressive constituents. In such a definition there is no room for a distinction between form and content; there are merely inter-related elements. An art

work is thus a relation among expressive elements; whether these elements are lines, colors, tones, words, meanings, representations, is unimportant. What Professor Weitz has very clearly delineated is a view of the art work in terms of the object itself rather than in terms derived from ordinary discourse.

The greater part of the book consists of an application of this theory to painting, music and literature. However, the effectiveness of many of Professor Weitz' assertions is quite limited by knowledge of only a few art works. Thus his long commentary on "Prufrock" contains little that is original and a great deal that is self-evident in the light of the achievement of the New Criticism. A similar lack of familiarity with major works accounts for his opinion that Wright's *Native Son* is the only novel where has been articulated the notion that man's freedom consists in his power to destroy life. (One of the more obvious meanings of Kirillov in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* is exactly that.) I emphasize these flaws because, with very few exceptions, the majority of philosophical analyses show little broad acquaintance with the fields of creative work for which they are theorizing.

An explanation of the nature of art which is even more original than that of Professor Weitz is presented by Arthur Little, S.J., in *The Nature of Art*. It is, I believe, a unique analysis of the artistic process, and one which deserves to be more widely studied on this side of the Atlantic.

The author's principal thesis is that significant art is the generator of the most exalted state of contemplation through a virtual intuition of the human soul. The observer or auditor considers in the significant art object man's life itself since he realizes the community of nature between himself—the microcosm—and the subject of the art work. As in all mental activity he has some awareness of self, of his own human consciousness, while recognizing an

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aspect of human existence expressed, symbolized, or suggested by the object. He then experiences whatever emotional reactions his understanding of the object elicits. When these pre-esthetic emotions reach their maximum intensity, the person is suddenly recalled from a consideration of the object to what is taking place within his own consciousness. He experiences an illumination of a supreme beauty in a virtual intuition of the soul induced by an intense awareness of the acts of the soul as manifest in contemplating and responding to the object. Thus from a consideration of the art object so great an awareness of his own mental state is engendered that he experiences an intuition of the source of those acts, the human soul. Of course, in the actual experience the temporal sequence, used here to formulate the theory logically, is not present.

Father Little offers a number of reasons to support his contention that this is the only possible explanation of the artistic process. He points out what he believes are the flaws in current esthetic theories, and particularly in that of Maritain. There are four major arguments in favor of the theory which must be answered before its validity can be disclaimed.

The author criticizes Maritain's assumption that "in contemplating beauty we touch a transcendental and thus the very likeness of God, in whose contemplation is the fulness of delight." He states, "The beauty of sensible things is as far as possible from the beauty of God." By this inference and those which follow it, the author seems to give in to a sort of esthetic Barthism—an almost complete failure to realize the implications of the notion of the analogy of being. For no matter how far from God's beauty the beauty of sensible objects may be, it is still transcendently related to it.

The first major argument to fortify the theory is as follows:

If it be granted now that great art can move a healthy mind to an over-

mastering degree it should be clear that it proposes to contemplation a higher than sensible beauty. A pleasure would not *overmaster* us unless it nearly fulfilled our utmost capacity for pleasure, and such a pleasure can only be caused by the highest order of beauty that it is in our nature to appreciate. Moreover, that beauty must be closely related to the end of the intellect, since the end of any intellect as such, and not precisely as a reasoning faculty, is to contemplate beauty. But every faculty is made for an end proportioned to it; the more perfect is never made for the sake of the less perfect; we are not given hands in order that by walking upon them we may rest our tired feet. Therefore we are not given an intellect, which is a spiritual faculty in order that we may gaze on material beauty as on its ultimate goal. The beauty therefore that is proportioned to the capacity of the intellect and can therefore overmaster it must itself be a spiritual beauty. And since it has been shown that such overmastering beauty is proposed by great art it follows that such art does not achieve its characteristic effect by the intrinsic beauty of its work which is material.

There are, it would appear, a number of fallacies both in reasoning and in fact in this series of arguments. First, that great art can move the human mind to an "overmastering degree" is not because of the spiritual object of contemplation, but rather because of the psychosomatic character of all of man's experiences. The mind as such is not overmastered, but only the physical instruments of it. There is thus a reciprocal action of sense and spirit which accounts for this intensity of the reaction to an artistic work. Second, to state "that we are not given an intellect which is a spiritual faculty, in order that we may gaze on material beauty as on its ultimate goal," is to err in two directions. The spiritual faculty does not gaze on material beauty, but apprehends the form of a beautiful object. The whole process of knowledge is neglected if one views this form *qua* form as material. The very nature of the act of knowing demands a

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compatibility between subject and object which is found in a mutual immateriality. Likewise the inference that we are given an intellect to contemplate ultimately the spiritual beauty of the soul is also erroneous, since its ultimate activity will be the knowledge of God, compared to which even the beauty of the soul must appear as an inferior object of contemplation.

In his second major argument the author asserts: "A fatal defect of M. Maritain's theory is that it cannot admit suggestiveness as an essential property of any kind of art. It takes no account of the power of a great work of art to awaken echoes or hint at invisible horizons and by exploiting associations to invoke a beauty not its own." This argument assumes, but fails to prove, that this suggestiveness is an essential constituent of the art work; such an assumption seems largely gratuitous, for it is a much more adequate explanation to see these associations as caused by the subject and not by the object. If a certain mathematical equation is associated with the thought of death, it does not follow that this suggestive power is an essential property of that equation. Likewise to maintain that certain great art works generally induce in many people similar associations is not to say that these associations are intrinsic to the works, but merely that they evoke a more universal reaction, just as the sight of a powder keg is more likely to be associated with the thought of death than is the mathematical equation.

"The third argument," says Father Little, "is the strongest of all. It is drawn from the problem of ugliness in art." He observes that there is incoherence in a number of great art works, such as certain Gregorian melodies and some paintings of Picasso. How then can these objects which are incoherent and therefore ugly induce the pleasure which we associate with the beautiful? The author, of course, would explain the pleasure as the result of their emotive power which induces a virtual intuition of the soul. But there are two con-

siderations to be made here which will help to answer the question without resorting to this theory. First, what Father Little sees as ugliness is better described as a lack of symmetry or conventional form; for these works possess that order which is the foundation of a beautiful object, and which consists in the apt disposition of all the means in the work to the end determined by the artist. Second, the contrast between the ugly and the beautiful frequently makes the latter more outstanding, and hence the complete work offers its own justification for such incoherence. Thus the "metaphysical deserts" of Dante are necessary for the perfection of the total *Commedia*.

Father Little's subsidiary argument that a work of art which is incoherent with the truth and which therefore should arouse no delight, may be disposed of in a similar manner. "Since beauty is truth," he writes, "falsehood can only be ugliness." Yet one might obtain true knowledge of an ugly thing knowing it now as ugly, and thus obtain an appreciation of a beautiful truth which is implicitly concretized in the object, and which constitutes part of its total structure. This problem of ugliness and falsehood in art leads logically to a discussion of the esthetic power of tragedy. In developing his theory of tragedy to conform to his general theory of intuiting the soul's nature, the author remarks that the delight engendered by this art form which demands often an experience of pity and fear cannot be explained by the mere exercise of the faculties involved. The reason he offers for this is that "we are always exercising them without any notable joy." The *sed contra* is quite simple, for we are not always exercising the faculties on a tragic art form; and an accurate parallel will point out that one will find great sensible delight in a fine liqueur, though he is always exercising his taste-buds on some object. It would seem that we can explain the nature of tragedy without accepting the author's theory of catharsis or

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any other Aristotelian biological analogies on the basis that any nature fulfills itself in joy. This reason coupled with the insight into the motivation and resolution of man's driving forces as vicariously experienced through the drama should explain adequately the delight we find in tragedy. However, we should not overlook the importance of that innate attraction for non-being which man is subject to, and which attracts him to the visualization of destruction; nor should we discount completely the sadism evident in fallen man as an explanation for the attraction of melodrama and the tragedy of blood.

The fourth argument maintains that because the soul after death has an immediate vision of its own nature, it must have a natural desire for that vision, and therefore will tend towards it even in this life. "Hence endeavour to overcome the inhibition to the intuition of the nature of the soul must comprise a large part of man's activity while in the body. But the only way that endeavour can have any measure of success is the virtual intuition of the soul already described, and no human activity except the esthetic act can be explained as necessarily including such virtual intuition." However, to admit with Saint Thomas that there will take place such an act of self-consciousness on the part of the separated intelligence is not necessarily to admit that this act will take the form of a direct intuition. Were the separated form raised to angelic nature this would be more nearly accurate; but actually the soul after death is an imperfect entity. It seems to me that there is both too much Platonism and a faulty theory of knowledge in the following supporting statement: "that is to say, having shaken off the drag of the body that has compelled it to abstract its knowledge from the senses and then dissect it part by part or aspect by aspect in order to estimate the full value of its gleanings, the intelligence now adapts itself to its new state of separation by exploiting its natural powers, hitherto smothered, of intuition or

direct knowledge." The separated soul is not an angel, though its mode of knowing is now through species infused by God, which is a type of angelic knowledge; yet it acquires new knowledge, not intuitively, as Father says, but through the normal process of reasoning. And, because its faculties are not naturally conformed to this mode of knowing, its knowledge is now somewhat confused, and less perfect than it was when the soul informed a human body. Father Little's statement would seem to suggest that the soul is going to acquire some imperfection by its union with the body after the resurrection.

Yet even granting that there is direct intuition of the soul before the resurrection of the body on the part of the separated intelligence, it does not necessarily follow that man is conscious of the desire for it. However, accepting even this, though it is not proved, it has been asserted by Maritain in an essay on natural mystical experience that an intuition of the substantial *esse* of the soul itself is attainable through natural means without any reference to the esthetic act. This essay published in the collection, *Ransoming the Time*, would thus contradict Father Little's statement "that no human activity except the esthetic act can be explained as necessarily including such virtual intuition."

Having read this book with a determined effort at impartiality, and fully realizing the deficiencies in current theories on the nature of art, I still feel that the above arguments of Father Little are not conclusive enough to justify rejecting these traditional esthetics and accepting that presented in this work. That the thesis is so untraditional should make us suspicious, but this does not excuse us from an open-minded consideration of it, nor justify us in condemning it in advance. This is undeniably a work honestly conceived and written, and one which does honor to its author for its many creative insights. But the criticisms above indicate that its novel

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clarification of the artistic process is generally invalid.

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The Ascent to Truth. By Thomas Merton.
Harcourt Brace. \$3.50.

If in his *Seven Storey Mountain* Thomas Merton gathered an audience and set the stage for that tremendous drama of the union of the soul with God, contemplation, and in his subsequent *Seeds of Contemplation* gave us to hear some of its inner melody, he has, in his latest book, *Ascent to Truth*, given us the full score. For here we have not only the philosophical and theological sub-structures of his theme but hear it counterpointed against the mystical doctrine of St. John of the Cross. It should be said at once, however, that the book is not addressed to the "specialist," though knowledge of the philosophical and theological implications underlying the author's exposition is immensely helpful. Rather is the book presented to all who are concerned with the values of spiritual living, which should mean *every man* by the very reason of his being a man, since that faculty which specifies him as such can find its perfect object and ultimate fulfillment only in the contemplation of infinite Truth. Merton's approach may be said to be different to the extent that one can be quite sure that the reader he has preeminently in mind is the modern man, to whom he addresses himself with sympathy and understanding.

The book falls into three parts. After a prologue which discusses the place of mysticism in man's life, Part One, "The Cloud and the Fire," orientates man as man in the universe with reference to the problem of Unbelief, False Mysticism, Knowledge and Unknowing in St. John of the Cross, as well as Concepts and Contemplation, and the Crisis of Dark

Knowledge, wherein Merton shows that it is of the very nature of faith, using concepts yet transcending them, that precipitates the theological crisis of which Christian mysticism is born. Faith, which sees God in darkness, *per speculum, in aenigmate*, by this very necessity is shown to be the fruit of another crisis, namely, that of an apophatic philosophy. Merton here is speaking of faith in the

... hierarchy of means by which we know God, not of faith as it is usually concretely found in Christians who have received it at the font and grown up with it running through their veins. They are accidentally absolved from the necessity of finding God between the horns of a philosopher's dilemma.

There is no such absolution for the contemplative. The Cross is the only way to mystical prayer.

Part Two, "Reason and Mysticism in St. John of the Cross," furnishes an introduction to that mystical theology which is strictly Thomist, the basic structures of which might be reduced to six brief questions of the *Prima Secunda* which treat of man's last end and the vision of God's Essence in beatitude. In this division Merton likewise discusses the relations of faith and reason, reason in the life of contemplation, and under titles of "Your Reasonable Service," "Between Instinct and Inspiration," "Reason and Reasoning," and "Intelligence in the Prayer of Quiet," the interactions of intellect and will in the pursuit of contemplation as articulated in terms of St. John's teaching. Part Three, "Doctrine and Experience," under headings taken from the texts of the Mystical Doctor—"The Mirror of Silvered Water," "A Dark Cloud Enlightening the Night," "The Loving Knowledge of God," "To the Mountain and the Hill," and "The Giant Moves in His Sleep"—Merton moves the congruence of intellect and will in the mystical dialectic of knowledge and love into the areas of trans-

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forming union where, at the very peak of the mountain of Truth, under the influence of God's immediate presence, the soul becomes "the actual medium in which God is known . . . remotely comparable to the Beatific Vision itself in which God's own divine light, filling and possessing and transforming the soul, takes the place of an idea or species in which the intelligence beholds Him."

Were one to name a prevailing *motif* in a study of such richness and scope it would be that of the significance and importance of the function of the intellect in the pursuit of perfection and even, and very especially, in the highest atmosphere of contemplation where concepts, though no longer formal means of experiential knowledge of God, nevertheless condition that knowledge, keeping mystical wisdom subject to specification by the definite conceptual propositions of dogmatic theology, a truth only too frequently slighted if not positively ignored in treatises dealing with mystical experience. Throughout the book Merton insists that on all the levels of the mystical life grace moves in a spiritual organism not only exercising its natural functions but rediscovering in itself capacities it never knew it had. "The lights of prayer that make us imagine we are beginning to be angels are sometimes only signs that we are finally beginning to be men. We do not have a high enough opinion of our own nature. We think we are at the gates of heaven and we are only just beginning to come into our own realm as free and intelligent beings." To be a holy man one must first be a *man*. In asceticism one must keep a careful balance. There is no Platonic dichotomy of flesh and spirit; man is by no means an angel imprisoned in a body; hence the kind of asceticism which literally seeks to destroy what is human in man, "to reduce the spirit to an innate element that is purely divine," is founded on grave metaphysical error which is immediately

apparent from the dependence of man's spiritual and psychological health on the right order and balance of his whole being—body and soul. And Merton remarks: "It is significant that some of the strongest language used by St. John of the Cross is poured out on the heads of men who defied reason with an inordinate love of bodily penance . . . The reason why so many pious men fail to become saints is that they do evil for the glory of God." Inordinate, unbalanced, and misdirected asceticism equates with this "evil."

There are brilliant treatments of the fundamental nature of unbelief, false mysticisms, the doctrine of *nada*—the asceticism of pure faith, and the connatural knowledges—the artistic and metaphysical intuitions of being—as natural analogues of contemplation. The problem of unbelief in modern times, says Merton, "is plainly not one of faithlessness but of irrationality." Hence the final irony that unbelief is unreasonable. "The intelligence has no right to be consciously unintelligible." "Theological faith is eminently reasonable." He analyzes successively the problems of three classes of men in their unbelief: the atheist; the man who, though intellectually accepting God's existence and the fact of revelation as credible, "still finds himself paralyzed and unable to believe;" and the nominal Catholic whose faith is little more than formalistic. He posits the real problem of unbelief not in the mind but in the *will*! Though to the self-righteous, ready to judge that those hesitating on the doorstep of the faith are being held back by great sins which they are unable to relinquish, Merton gives this sobering reply:

There are men of high and sincere spirituality who come close to the Church but cannot accept the faith. They understand some aspects of Catholic theology as well as, if not better than, some of the priests who might undertake to instruct them.

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They have gone deep into the mystical writings of saints of whom many of the clergy have never even heard. . . .

They may be ascetics, practice mental prayer, and are often genuinely sincere and humble men "capable of a certain spiritual modesty and tact which many of us might envy . . . It would be shameful to declare, offhand, that their inability to accept the faith was due to spiritual pride. . . ." If pride it be it is not so much one of individual expression as one of original sin "that has left the whole human race in confusion." They realize that faith is a gift which will involve the gift of themselves to God. It is this that makes them hesitate, and wait for some definite sign.

Too, if Merton is specific about anything, and he can be *very* specific, it is that mysticism be not confused with that spurious entity which

since the Romantic Revival has been usurped by literary critics and historians and applied to everyone who has sought to liberate the emotional and affective life of man from the restraint of conventional or reactionary norms of thought. In fact, any political or artistic dreamer who could bring tears to your eyes or smother you with sensations of unutterable *Weltschmerz* was considered a "mystic."

He is also most meticulous in his distinctions between the essentials of mysticism and certain accidental accompaniments such as visions, revelations, and interior locutions, which many confuse with and mistake for the real thing. Merton reiterates the Church's critical reserve in these matters, and shows St. John of the Cross as drastically severe in his cautions toward such as are too ready to accept their authenticity, a bit of advice, which Merton says, might come as a surprise to such whose spiritual reading consists in "revelations and locutions supposedly uttered by Our Lord and His saints to pious women. St. John

of the Cross would declare that even though these mystics were in good faith, many of the messages they thought they were receiving from heaven were, in fact, received from themselves." Though when all has been said about the excellences of contemplation Merton makes very clear that it is but a *means* to perfection.

Among the important works of a significant author, frequently one book will stand out as in a special sense definitive and representative of that author's excellence in a particular field, as for instance Jacques Maritain's *Degrees of Knowledge* and Etienne Gilson's *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*. Of such caliber and status would seem to be Thomas Merton's *Ascent to Truth*.

If technical terms or idioms may occasionally cause difficulty, they are more than counterbalanced by the fluidity of Merton's style, and the simple clarity and homeliness of his illustrations. The book has, also, appendices of biographical notes on the principal theological writers mentioned and of source material. An added topical index would have been of immense help. Merton's publishers have exercised their usual good taste in the selection of format.

—SISTER M. THÉRÈSE, S.D.S.

Modern Irish Fiction. By Benedict Kiely. Golden Eagle Books.

Truth in the Night. By Michael McLaverty. Macmillan. \$3.00.

Insurrection. By Liam O'Flaherty. Gollancz (Toronto: Longmans).

The Great Disciple and Other Stories. By W.B. Ruddy. Bruce. \$2.50.

Sweet Cork of Thee. By Robert Gibbings. Dutton. \$4.50.

Mr. Benedict Kiely's *Modern Irish Fiction* is a reliable and comprehensive guide (with biographical and bibliographical notes) to Irish fiction of the past thirty years. Mr. Kiely can speak with familiarity of the work of the fifty writers who

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are considered, some only in passing, in his survey. He lists, moreover, the very few Irish fiction writers of the period whose work, for one reason or another, falls outside the scope of his enquiry. In fact, the only notable omission is that of Mr. Kiely himself, whose novels are among the most interesting of the works of the younger writers. It is a study in the fiction of a free people after the political pressures which had once borne down so heavily have been removed. Mr. Kiely sketches the nineteenth century background lightly but adequately, dwelling at some length on the one great native novelist of the age, William Carleton, whose life and work was the subject of the author's earlier *Poor Scholar*.

Kiely makes no attempt at a full-length criticism of any of the writers he deals with; such an effort at this stage, he feels, would be of little use, and he wishes to avoid a mere "personal statement about contemporary events." He achieves perspective by relating the works to the Irish tradition, to kindred writings abroad, and to the life that they portray. By a consideration of the dominant themes (e.g. Dreams, Heroes, Rebels, Lovers and Creeds) in Irish life and literature he shows how Irish writers in modern times have looked upon "Ireland, Europe, the world, and the soul of man."

There are other methods of investigation which could have been adopted but none which would have proved so rewarding to the outside reader who wants a native appraisal of Irish literature since Yeats and Joyce. For example, the contrast between Joyce and Daniel Corkery, at the opposite poles of Rejection and Acceptance, is striking and yet unforced; or again the refusal of the Irish genius to be urbanised is shown to have left Joyce in this regard also without a true successor; and the accompanying social comment is particularly valuable to the criticism of such writers as Mary Lavin, Elizabeth Bowen and Sean O'Faolain. His

strictures on Frank O'Connor may seem severe but they are mainly devoted to rescuing one of our finest writers from his own cantankerousness. O'Connor has remarked how inappropriate was the cold epitaph Yeats chose for himself; but it would now seem that this far more human observer of Irish life is trying to justify it for himself. In a vain attempt to "cast a cold eye" and yet peer closely and wink broadly he is developing a pronounced squint.

Dr. Johnson considered the Irish a fair-minded people, "for they never speak well of one another;" and it must be admitted that few Irish writers have shown themselves as free as Mr. Kiely from petty jealousy in judging their fellows. His criticism is incisive and his style lively even if he slips at times into a glib phrase, all the more regrettable since the judgment behind it is never superficial. It is good to find pioneer work done with such competence as well as courage.

Exile is one of the facts of Irish life and literature discussed by Mr. Kiely, and the other four books here under review might well be considered in such a context. Exile is so complex an experience—escape, parting, detachment, home-sickness—that its effect on a writer is unpredictable. For the Irish writer it has been mainly nostalgic—pre-eminently so for Joyce, the proud young rebel who left Dublin ("the center of paralysis") and found every detail of it worth recalling.

To some Irish writers exile has brought a needed detachment, and detachment is a virtue which does not come naturally to an isolated people whose whole energies were concentrated, from medieval times almost to our own day, in a desperate effort to preserve and defend whatever was theirs—spiritually, culturally, economically. Lacking it, we have too often skimmed our work, relying on a quick response instead of telling the story through to the end.

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The Irish, when they are vocal at all, are natural lyricists, in prose and poetry. That this lyricism has been a native bias not only our early Gaelic poetry but also our romances (epic material which never achieved epic form largely due to a lack of the proportion, restraint, and detachment demanded in dramatic narrative) bear witness. One can readily appreciate the remark of Yeats as he read the plays submitted from all over Ireland to the early Abbey Theatre, that dialogue would never give us any difficulty but we had best learn construction from masters abroad. His advice to the Irish poets to learn their trade was sorely needed then; the advice today might be directed rather at the novelists and playwrights who often rely too heavily on their lyrical virtues.

Michael McLaverty is one of our lyrical novelists. It may be that his gifts hinder his success at times. McLaverty is a true lyricist; he does not indulge in purple passages, but he draws out the poetic essence of the casual action or object. "He began to sing, but seeing a net of ices dangling above the ears of his horse he broke off the spray of an ash and tied it above her head. He jolted on, past lakes as blue as the sky and bluer than the sea that could be seen in the wedges of the hills. Overhead moved a solitary cloud and below on the land its shadow crawled, creeping over the cart, drawing its blind across the pane of lake and rolling it up again till the water shone with the blueness of potato spray." And it is with such a touch that he handles character as well as description; it is always with a sensitive finger that he touches the sensitive spot.

Now, as far as part of *Truth in the Night* is concerned, this treatment is appropriate as well as engaging; for his novel is in part a story of nostalgia. Martin Gallagher may only have migrated to Belfast, but to an islander that was exile. When the story opens he has come back,

and through his eyes we see every detail of his recovered world, so new and yet so old. The conflict is between Vera Reilly, who is from the city, and the island into which she has married; and the sub-plot, involving the Craig family who forsake the island for the mainland, reinforces the theme. The conflict is real and the description of it is moving, mainly because McLaverty, who has command of both, never forces either the drama or the poetry.

What the novel lacks is balance. It is the story of an island and its people, and McLaverty knows both. But Vera Reilly is almost as much a stranger to us as she was to the islanders: not that she is unconvincing, not that he does not explain her—in fact he *explains* far too much about her—but simply that she does not live for us as the other characters do. The islanders are explained by their surroundings; Vera is apart from hers. For that reason, as well as for the role she plays in the tragedies which are too casually piled up at the end, she is the one character we needed to be convinced of. At times she seems to be only a catalytic agent; never does she come quite clearly into focus. McLaverty is a meditative writer who tends to be too restrained in his effects on occasion. That is why the harsher note of Vera Reilly's corroding selfishness jars on us and why such incidents as her brutal treatment of Jamesy, the foundling who is brought to the island as a servant, have a half-hearted violence. Yet the novel is so beautifully written and the real struggle between a place and those who refuse to submit to it is told so sensitively that, like McLaverty's earlier novels, it lives up to the motto from Herbert that he has chosen for himself:

I will complain—yet praise;
I will bewail—approve;
And, all my sour-sweet days
I will lament—and love.

Liam O'Flaherty is a born story teller; instinctively, as well as from the experi-

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ence of exile, he knows the value of detachment. *Insurrection* is a story of the Easter Rising of 1916 and it has the pace and tension of a true O'Flaherty novel. He delights and excels in these moments of violence; with Stapleton in this story he says: "I am interested in any form of beauty, in which I include war, at least in the sense that it is a supreme expression of human passion."

Perhaps the happiest inspiration in the whole book was to show us the opening scenes through the eyes of a Galway laborer on his way home from England; he has been robbed of his savings in Dublin as McLaverty's corresponding character was robbed in Belfast. The surge of patriotism he cannot explain except in terms of his nostalgia for Conemara. Again and again as one reads one is reminded of the old epics, and no Irish writer has a more clear-cut beauty of description. He uses historical details but he never takes refuge in them. The one unconvincing character is Stapleton, the poet-revolutionary, who too obviously introduces O'Flaherty's own comments at times; and the moments when he is holding forth on his not-very-startling "revolutionary" theories have about the same relation to O'Flaherty the artist as one of the thoroughbreds he describes so often in unforgettable prose has to a hobby-horse.

"A bit o' the blarney, tenderized with romance of the bogs and the crags, the wee folk, and the sentimental hearts of Ireland" is what the blurb assures us we will find in *The Great Disciple and Other Stories*. To anybody with a respect for his emotions or intelligence the words are less an invitation than a warning. One suspects that the author is going to take one of the famous short cuts up Olympus and that the prospect isn't going to be so very Irish after all. Fortunately, the description does not cover all the stories nor do full justice to their flavour.

W. B. Ready is an Irishman from Wales, at present living in this country. In exile, we are told, he was anxious "that his children learn what life was like back home." This may have been the origin of the "Coo-Cullen" stories given here, for while they are lacking in distinction they are fluent and simple and give a fairytale atmosphere to the cycle. "But 'St. Patrick's Day in the Afternoon'" is all that the cover led us to fear; for a moment we are afraid that that rowly monster, the Stage Irishman, has returned from the tomb. At times, as in the title story, Mr. Ready gives us a promising situation and credible characters and then leads them to a conclusion that reads like a sentimental trifle. At other times he could have moved us by exercising more restraint.

There is a danger that Mr. Ready's strength may also prove his weakness. He has relied heavily on local color in his Irish and Welsh and even in his war stories. Geography no less than history can distract the writer from his main concern, which is human nature and not local peculiarities of speech, dress or custom. The way of the regional writer seems an easier one and for the exile it has a natural attraction, for fellow-exiles an immediate appeal; but such success can recoil on the honest writer later and keep him from more significant work.

This is not, of course, to say that the stories should not have roots, that picturesque detail has not got its charm, or that racial characteristics may not cut deep into the mind and soul of a people. But the author must know how wide he should go, and how deep.

The "wee folk" as literary material are as good as the author can make them; one does not need to be generally interested in Irish fairies to appreciate James Stephens. In "The Leprechauns" Mr. Ready shows that he has the gift; here he does not give the subject its

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head but keeps the tight double-rein of whimsey and matter-of-fact. "Patrick Will Take Over" achieves a similar balance and that, too, is the way in which Irishmen always tell stories of their Apostles.

There are two stories of real promise in this first collection and it is these that show clearly how necessary it is for him to forget the easy approaches. "Barring the Weight," which won the *Atlantic Monthly* "First" award, is a fine story: simple, spare, controlled. "Solitary Dogan" is good and might be the germ of something much better. On such a foundation some distinguished short stories might be built.

Robert Gibbings is an exile who has returned. He has written about his travels in the remotest regions but now, as in his *Lovely is the Lee*, he is writing about his home town. There is little to say about his book except that it is a delight. It is about dances, pubs, tinkers, mermaids, archaeologists and all that he encountered, or was reminded of, in a leisurely meander through Cork and Kerry. It is a charming book and its charm is real, as real as the descriptions of Irish scenery, the snatches of Irish folklore and the engravings by the author which crown the book. Everywhere he goes there are characters and, since Gibbings never interviews them, they talk. There was the Cork man who had traveled and been impressed: "The loveliest thing I've seen in this world, after my wife, is Chartres."

"A day or a week or a month or five years away, and when I get back everything is the same. I've never heard a cross word in that green Valley Desmond, I've never heard a child cry. In that womb among the hills there is the peace of the unborn. Time passes imperceptibly as the growth of a child." It would be hard to frame a finer tribute to one's birthplace.

—PATRICK J. CASEY

Loyola University

The Structure of Poetry. By Elizabeth Sewell. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

English Poetry and Its Contribution to the Knowledge of a Creative Principle. By Leone Vivante. London: Faber and Faber.

Criticism continues to be a field of major activity at the mid-century. There are always new problems and new approaches, overlooked writers and untried methods. The two books under consideration are original contributions to the field.

Miss Sewell's *The Structure of Poetry* is a difficult book to get into but, once one has found the clue to its organization, quite simply and masterfully done. The work of a young Englishwoman who holds a Ph.D. degree from Cambridge and has been Howald Research Fellow at Ohio State University, it offers a new approach to modern poetry. "I have called the work *The Structure of Poetry*," the author writes in her preface, "but it would perhaps have been more accurate to have called it the construction of a way of thinking about poetry."

On page 50 of the book we find a diagram which gives us Miss Sewell's "way of looking at things." It consists of six main divisions or categories: Perfect Order; Order; Probable Order; Probable Disorder; Disorder; Perfect Disorder. The first and last of these are outside of human experience. Under Order we find Logic; embracing Order and Probable Order we have Number; Language concerns itself with Probable Order and Probable Disorder; Dream moves through Probable Disorder and Disorder; Nightmare is located in the field of Disorder. We note that Language occupies the middle field. I quote from pages 85-86 of the book:

Language is an open system, subject to arbitrary order and disorder. The aim of poetry is to create from language a closed relation system by resolution of the two forces of order and disorder, not by the total exclusion of one or the other but by utilizing each

so that each may cancel the other out and a momentary equilibrium be formed . . . The poet abandons the relations of similarity and succession as proffered to him by experience and ordinary language; and by the organization of one half of language, sound-look, according to Number's system of similarity and succession, and the organization of the other half, reference, according to Dream's system of similarity and succession, he seeks to create a perfect system of its own, out of time and space—that emptiness and silence which shall be the final beauty.

The reader will pardon this long quotation. It is the nucleus of the book, and it is illustrated by means of a very intimate analysis of the poetry of Rimbaud (specifically *Les Illuminations* and *Bateau Ivre*) and that of Mallarmé (the *Sonnets* and *Un Coup de Dés*). Rimbaud tried "to get everything into language," and Mallarmé tried "to get everything out." Thus they moved towards opposite extremes in the two tendencies of language, the one towards pure disorder, the other towards pure order. The demonstration is brilliant, but Miss Sewell herself more than implicitly criticizes this phenomenon when, at the very end of her book, she proposes Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* as a more perfect equilibrium of the two antagonistic forces which neither Rimbaud nor Mallarmé succeeded in resolving, which, indeed, they moved towards as two opposite absolutes. Coleridge's poem is like a third ship voyaging across the uncertain waters of language; it "holds the balance between the other two, not by detaching itself from them but by embodying in itself the characteristics of each, and making from them what is perhaps a more perfect equilibrium."

Miss Sewell cites as the four marks of *The Ancient Mariner's* special excellence: (1) the ordering of its "sound-look" according to the principle of Number, i.e. versification, and of content according to the ways of Dream; (2) its balance in its universe—"an equilibrium of movement, not of fixity;" (3) its maintaining an

equilibrium in the mind of the reader by means of a story; (4) its revelation of an equilibrium in the mind of the poet. She does not find even the moral of the poem out of place. Of the two other things besides poetry which hold the balance in the mind between order and disorder, namely, laughter and religion, Coleridge makes use of the latter. He thus centers his poem in the deep heart of human experience. Implicitly, Rimbaud and Mallarmé are judged. Exit the former raving, the latter in a trance of nirvana.

A brilliant, even dazzling book. Whoever wrote the note on the jacket hit it off with unwonted accuracy: "The independence of thought, with results which are valid, gives this work of original and creative scholarship a quality of suppressed excitement."

In spite of its initial difficulty, I found Miss Sewell's book much easier going than Leone Vivante's *English Poetry*. Mr. Vivante is an Italian philosopher who has written much on aesthetics. Apparently this is his first book in English (no disparagement intended—the style is perfectly clear and idiomatic). It boasts a preface by T. S. Eliot in which Vivante is described as that extraordinary thing, philosopher-aesthetician and artist-aesthetician. The reader of this book, says Eliot, "will have been shown, in a new light, the poetry of poets whom he thought he already understood." He also points up the peculiar characteristics of Vivante's method: Vivante distinguishes between "poetic thought" and "the thought of the poet." Poetry is not thought dressed up in verse, but a special kind of thinking. "Something comes into being which is new—new in the sense that it cannot be explained by literary or other influences." This new thing is not an infantile or racial memory merely, but a true creation.

The essays themselves, apart from the theoretical introduction and conclusion, deal with poets whom Mr. Vivante apparently found particularly interesting to himself. Some are the universally acknowledged

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great: Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson. But there are also Gray, Collins, Elizabeth B. Browning, Longfellow, Emily Brontë, Meredith, Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, and Francis Thompson. Dryden and Pope are conspicuous by their absence. Nor is Chaucer to be found in the list, nor Donne. The nineteenth century tradition, with the emphasis on the romantics, is operative here.

The thesis of the author seems romantic, too: "The consciousness of a principle of inward light—an original, self-active principle, which characterizes life and spontaneity as contrasted with mechanism—has found in English poetry one of its richest and highest expressions." Vivante has apparently developed his philosophy of the self-active principle (he also calls it the principle of indeterminacy) in separate volumes; to these one ought to turn for a better understanding of his point of view. In his own introduction to the present volume he speaks of "a reality which cannot be identified with its objective and in some respects endlessly divisible aspect of existence." Objective elements, he says, cannot explain the unity of an act of thought.

But we have also a direct knowledge of a reality . . . which is always ahead of its form *qua* formed, and the essence of which is to escape its very self in so far as it is objectively identified. The indeterminate and *potential* (positively, powerfully potential) character of activity is indeed immediately felt and known. It accounts immediately and intelligibly for the *many-in-one* and for the present infinity which characterizes mental life. It is not the abstractly inferred, still less the non-phenomenal or super-phenomenal *condition* of the synthesis of thought; it creates, it *is* this synthesis.

It is this reality of perception and thought that poets express, this "spiritual essence" which they disclose. "The strength of their words lies above all in a deepening realization of the spirit."

We have here not the poet as maker but as *vates*, as seer. It is this quality of creative vision that Vivante seeks and finds in the poets he studies—e.g., in Shakespeare the active principles, "full of inward purposiveness," of joy and sorrow ("Joy is but a value of self-realization and a value of infinity"); in Milton the "inner light" and its sources; in Collins the concept of simplicity ("Simplicity means an indeed admirable implication of all in all"); in the romantics the sense of a transcendent reality; in Meredith the effort to reach life "in its very principle, in its deepest spontaneity."

The separate essays seem to be unified by the working of Vivante's principle of active indeterminacy, but the many illustrations and developing analyses in the chapters on the various poets are somewhat complicated and overwhelming. Perhaps a second or third reading of the book would reveal depths of profundity where the first yields too often a sense of bewilderment. To add to the anxiety of the reviewer, Eliot in his preface cites with approval the very philosopher (R. G. Collingwood) whom Vivante in his conclusion takes issue with. A familiarity with modern Italian idealist philosophers would perhaps orient this book better than the present reviewer is able to do.

—VICTOR M. HAMM

Marquette University

The Poetry of Ezra Pound. By Hugh Kenner. New Directions. \$4.00.

This is the first full length study of Pound. It is also the first study to criticize him on his own terms. That is to say, there has been no serious criticism of the writers who made a major revolution in English literature in the early twentieth century. Is not the situation somewhat parallel to that of the early nineteenth century? The impressionist landscape poets and painters after Thomson's *Seasons* developed a set of techniques and insights which culminated in

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the work of the great romantics. But Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Landor never got serious criticism in their own time. And the immediate result was the recession which occurred in Victorian poetry. The demands of radical readjustment of vision and sensibility made by the romantics were not met. Victorian critics clamored persistently for simpler and more immediate forms of moral and social expression from their poets. They insisted on intelligibility, meaning rationalistic enunciations and affirmations, with the result that the heritage of the romantics was developed not in England but in France, by the symbolists.

Joyce, Pound, Yeats, Lewis, Eliot, the true heirs of the symbolists, then carried the symbolist discoveries on to the point of rich fulfillment. But the first stage of our "Victorian" reaction set in with Auden-Lewis Spender and "socially conscious" moralizing in the 1930's. With the current clamor both in America and England (no names need be mentioned) for a return to simple statement in poetry we are back in the "keepsake" verse era of the Victorians with a Martin Tupper phase imminent. It may well be that nothing can be done about the recurrence of such banal mutations in letters. A period of discovery and achievement may, indeed, exhaust the collective intellectual powers of a whole nation or community. But it is hard to prove such conditions. What can be shown is that sloth, vanity, idle preconceptions and general incompetence permit serious work to be shoved aside unexamined. The picayune flatulence supplanted the new work of Pound, Eliot and Joyce in the 1930's before the ink was dry on it. Auden diluted certain features of Eliot until they could be regarded as fashionable mannerisms rather than serious modes of vision. Christopher Fry is the diluter of the moment. Surely it is the business of living criticism to

spot such diseases and distempers in the growing body of letters.

Mr. Kenner is right, therefore, to devote a good deal of space to scotching and erasing various features of the Pound legend. In our time the spectacular failures of communication are nowhere more evident than in the weird masks which the literate public slaps over the countenance of new work. Mr. Eliot has been compelled to wear a series of such masks since 1922. Yeats was allowed to wear his own mask on condition that he never showed his face except to his friends. And the Yeats mask was an explicit recognition of the inability of the public to look at poetry except when conventionally disguised.

The procedure followed by Mr. Kenner is to draw passages from Pound's prose which bear specifically on the effects sought in particular parts of poems. Both Pound and Eliot, facing the peculiar problems of communication in our time, have gone to great pains in their prose to analyze all of their characteristic efforts. Naturally they have done this in connection with analogous or contrasting effects in other poets from Homer to Dante, Villon and Rimbaud. But, in general, this labor has been regarded as their personal lucubrations about other poets. But the moment it is seen that a practising poet is, in his criticism, necessarily concerned with his own technical problems, his comments on other writers become a perfect key to himself.

Mr. Kenner has successfully vindicated this approach in Pound's case, with the result that everything from *Personae* to the *Pisan Cantos* lies before the reader with the kind of intelligibility which Pound's own prose has amply provided. Mr. Kenner has thus done a good deal of the work which readers should do for themselves. But there is little evidence that even professional critics are today equipped with the patience or devotion

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necessary to acquire insight into serious poetry. There is overwhelming evidence to show that they are now, as always, the spokesmen for any type of prescriptive or established attitude. In consequence they are typically indignant at the sort of self-effacing honesty that goes into the creation and renewal of modes of vision.

The present clamor against serious poetry is based on the assumption that the function of art in society is like that of advertising, to provide assurance and conviction about those things which, regardless of facts, people wish to believe. If art has any deeper function than that, if the poetic process is an embodiment and projection of the modes of human cognition themselves, then the present clamor is as mistaken as it is ill-conceived.

Mr. Kenner has not only provided an apparatus of exegesis for the reader of Pound but has shown the sense in which he was quite properly designated by Eliot as *il miglior fabbro*. And he has located Pound in the European tradition of letters in such a way as to indicate his true bearings and dimensions as a major poet.

—H. MARSHALL MCLUHAN

St. Michael College
University of Toronto

The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man. By Herbert Marshall McLuhan. Vanguard. \$4.50.

It is almost a paradox in this era of specialization that we can come to an understanding of our world only through a simultaneous approach from all possible starting points. A combined effort of philosophy, literary criticism, and sociological analysis is needed; and even this is not enough if the synthetic attack is not carried by a strong conviction of what the end of man is, and by a no less decisive will to reopen an adequate space

in our society to the genuine values of human existence. Several writers have recently tried to bring out the meaning and trend of modern mass society through a universal survey. But no one has done it with so much verve and in so original a way as Herbert Marshall McLuhan.

Mechanization, technical developments in means of communication, and modern psychology today make full control over the human mind possible. Public opinion can be manipulated. And it is not only in the totalitarian state that this enormous power is used (or rather, abused) to get command over man. The *Mechanical Bride* shows to what an extent also in our democratic society the individual is subjugated to the iron rule of the collective mind; even to those to whom this fact was well known Mr. McLuhan's profusely illustrated book comes as a revelation. It is to the author's credit that we are thunderstruck and overwhelmed by his presentation of things we "know." His ingenious method produces this effect which may make us stop and think before it is too late. His idea is to use the devices of "commercial education," by which the public is being made helpless, for the purpose of the public's enlightenment. Hence, he guides the reader through the nightmarish thicket of advertisements, comic strips, newspaper front pages which impress themselves upon us daily and hourly. He shows us what they mean and brings to light correlations and connections between them and other currents of thought, sentiment, and ideas we would never dream of. He attempts "to set the reader at the center of the revolving picture created by these affairs where he may observe the action that is in progress and in which everybody is involved. From the analysis of that action, it is hoped, many individual strategies may suggest themselves." I would go further and hope that even group strategies may be evoked by the stimulating thoughts of our author.

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Going through this book with the unusual title, the highly unconventional illustrations, the problem-summarizing questions at the beginning of each chapter which challenge us with their biting wit, one is tempted to classify *The Mechanical Bride* as a magnificent satire of our industrial society. But when one reads the text he is surprised at the elaborate analysis and philosophical profundity which lead the discussion into a dimension different from the satirical approach. The book itself can be called scientific, in spite of much unorthodoxy in presentation, form and content. But the effect certainly is that of a satire.

We would not realize the full implication of industrialization on the human person and the life of mind and spirit if the author did not force us into seeing the paradoxical contradictions of our present ways of life. He goes through with it to the end of the rope. For instance, in the case where the "rope" is an expensive bracelet (in an advertisement of a famous jeweler), he refers to Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* and to a thought of Bergson who, in his studies of time and mind, makes it clear that if all the motion in the universe were doubled in speed, including the passing of our own lives, we would recognize it through the impoverishment of our minds thus produced.

The chapter whose heading was chosen as the title for the whole book centers around two female legs on a pedestal (the advertisement of a hosiery manufacturer). Mr. McLuhan considers these isolated legs as a facet of our "replaceable parts" cultural dynamics, and he develops this idea to its last consequences. There is today this strange dissociation of sex not only from the human person but even from the unity of the body. The mechanization of our whole life makes us believe that the application of some external medicament or piece of clothing or perfume to each single part of our

body will make us glamorous or successful. This conception of human life, body and mind, as a mechanical unit is a by-product of a way of thinking that derives from our theoretical and practical intercourse with the machine. Business has then taken hold of this pattern of analytical thinking and exploited it for commercial purposes. How many more products can be invented and sold if each part of our body requires a special remedy? The commercialization of this trend towards mechanization, on its part, has then led to the current glamour campaigns. Mr. McLuhan now makes it clear that this current emphasis on glamour and sex does not at all indicate "new heights of a man-woman madness."

Sex weariness and sex sluggishness are, in measure at least, both the cause and increasingly the outcome of these campaigns. No sensitivity of response could long survive such a barrage. What does survive is the view of the human body as a sort of love-machine capable merely of specific thrills . . . It makes inevitable both the divorce between physical pleasure and reproduction and also the case for homosexuality. In the era of thinking machines, it would be surprising, indeed, if the love-machine were not thought of as well.

I believe that for people actively interested in a Catholic renaissance nothing can be more important than to search and discover the causes for the attitudes, so much prevailing in our present society, which paralyze life and prevent us from achieving unity of body and mind and soul. There is scarcely an author who has analyzed the situation so forcefully as Herbert Marshall McLuhan. In this book he is a sociologist with the additional wisdom of a generally educated man. His findings can certainly be used as much for an interpretation of contemporary literature and of the climate in which it lives, as far as better understanding is concerned of the complex matters which are causing marriage

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problems, individual unhappiness, and the indifference towards the higher things in life so often observed and blamed but so little seen as an unavoidable consequence of the age of industrialization.

In this connection the chapter "Horse Opera and Soap Opera" is also very enlightening; for again the split between business and society, between action and feeling, office and home, man and woman, is presented to us with a rich mass of literary references. I hope that many courses in contemporary literature will become more attractive to the students for the teachers' having gone through this book.

This review would be incomplete if mention were not made of the most pertinent remarks of Mr. McLuhan in regard to privacy. Naturally an ad for Lysol in a chapter called "How Not to Offend" is the occasion. "The privacy that was once the refreshment of the mind and spirit is now associated only with those 'shameful' and strenuous tasks by which the body is made fit for contact with other bodies." With reference to observations made by Margaret Mead (who is often quoted) our author says: "The bathroom has been elevated to the very stratosphere of industrial folklore, it being the gleam, the larger hope, which we are appointed to follow."

There is no doubt that the separation of things which belong together and the loss of privacy (among our youth also a loss of a desire for it, this loss mainly conditioned by our educational system, especially on the college level) are the main factors of human life in industrial society. It is the essence of *The Mechanical Bride* to bring these facts again and again to our attention, each time in a new and stimulating facet.

There are some valuations in the book with which one has not to agree. The author is unenthusiastic about the *New Yorker* or James Thurber or Ogden Nash, but he approves of Li'l Abner and its

creator, Al Capp. He seems one-sided in his chapter on public opinion polls, entitled "The Galluputians:" he emphasizes the negative elements of polls, inducing the individual to replace convictions by vague opinions and to give up his identity, but he forgets that public opinion surveys also strengthen the role of the individual in society because they make him realize that the voice of the "little man" counts.

In general, however, Mr. McLuhan is not at all negativistic. Comparing himself with the sailor in Poe's *A Descent into the Maelstrom*, he quotes the sailor as saying that he even sought amusement in speculating upon the velocities of the happenings in the whirlpool.

It was this amusement born of his rational detachment as a spectator of his own situation that gave him the thread which led him out of the Labyrinth. And it is in the same spirit that this book is offered as an amusement. Many who are accustomed to the note of moral indignation will mistake this amusement for mere indifference. But the time for anger and protest is in the early stages of a new process. The present stage is extremely advanced. Moreover, it is full, not only of destructiveness but also of promises of rich new developments to which moral indignation is a very poor guide.

How refreshing to see a critique of a period and of its morals avoiding moral indignation!

—RUDOLPH E. MORRIS

Marquette University

* *Shakespeare's Prose*. By Milton Crane.
University of Chicago Press. \$3.00.

For a hundred years and more after Shakespeare's death his critics agreed that he was a natural artist. By this judgment they meant that he broke almost every recognized rule of dramatic construction and yet, bafflingly, succeeded. It was another way of saying that Shakespeare composed—and composed is the right word—

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by instinct; and the instinct of a genius cannot be reduced to rules, principles or conventions. This truth is well seen in the use of prose in Shakespeare's plays.

Milton Crane realizes the difficulty, and his study of Shakespeare's prose is the more valuable because he makes no startling or particularly new claims. He records at some length the use of prose by other Elizabethan dramatists and the conventions which they observed. He analyzes, but not too closely, the differing use of prose and verse in Shakespeare's comedies (in which he includes the Falstaff plays) and in the tragedies. But he has not exhausted the subject, nor indeed can the subtleties of Shakespeare's language ever be finally demonstrated in a printed book. As Mr. Crane concludes, "Shakespeare's prose is always a *dramatic* prose; its effects are conceived in terms of the listening spectator;" and there is no adequate substitute for the listener's ear. Nevertheless, the book will be stimulating and revealing to those who have not hitherto realized the complexities of Shakespeare's language.

—G. B. HARRISON

University of Michigan

Auden: An Introductory Essay. By Richard Hoggart. Yale University Press. \$3.75.

One of the cruxes of criticism today has been occasioned by the situation in which we see a large academic interest in literature coexisting with the absence of any one civilized center. The breakdown of communication between the arts and science is, at one level, the result of a lack of conversation. But the absence of serious talk among men in various fields today is owing to irresponsibility. In a civilized center poets, physicists, philosophers and historians are vividly aware that their diverse interests really matter to society at large. They do not have to be told that what they do and think and see needs constant sifting through other minds and tempers. Without such sifting as daily conversation provides they know that the cur-

rents of thought and action will turn away into sterile channels.

By contrast the academic world suffers from excessive humility. It is characterized by the conviction that its thoughts and pursuits are as insignificant as the Chamber of Commerce would like to think. Accepting this evaluation of itself, the academic world cannot be bothered to assume social responsibility or to talk seriously about its own pursuits even to itself. Perhaps there would be fewer specialist meetings and conferences if men of letters were sufficiently expert in literature to be interested in modern physics. And physicists would want to know much more about letters if they were aware that poetic method was always at least a decade ahead of laboratory method.

With the advent of the encyclopedic poetry of Pound, Joyce, and Eliot, critics have had to take cognizance of a variety of disciplines. This has in turn given a focus and relevance to modern criticism which has cut sharply across the antiquarian bias of the academic study of literature. So that literature "departments" are tormented today with a most salutary set of misgivings and self-reproaches. The academic study of literature was initiated in the middle of the last century under the auspices of European nationalism and fostered by the dominant science of biology. The explanation and elucidation of works of art went ahead on the current assumptions about heredity and environment as an interplay of "influences."

That remains the status of academic literary study just one century later. But biology is no longer the dominant science. The multi-leveled consciousness fostered by modern physics and anthropology is matched in the contemporary arts of music, poetry, and painting. The unilateral perspectives of nineteenth century biological theory cannot be imposed even in an academic milieu any longer. And the modern critic holds out to the antiquarian a set of techniques for historical study which are too tempting to be resisted.

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In tendency at least, contemporary criticism is disposed to resume some of the social functions long accepted by, say, the economist. Even the economic historian is constantly challenged by the problem of attaining insight for the present control and prediction of economic life. His study of the past is intensified by the pursuit of a contemporary wisdom. Something of that salutary attitude is inevitably imported into literary study when the present status of poetry is allowed some attention simultaneously with the past.

Mr. Hoggart's modest essay on Auden serves well to illustrate such a view. Mr. Hoggart takes a much lower view of the general reader to whom he directs his study than does Mr. Kenner in his essay on Pound. He is more academic than Mr. Kenner in staying almost exclusively with Auden and making no effort to place Auden's activities in relation to the poetry of his time. He gives easy prose accounts of Auden's poetry and spells out even the longer poems. That Auden is important is not a fact to be queried or tested for Mr. Hoggart, but to be taken for granted.

However, he is vaguely aware of Auden's slapstick methods and his easy aping of a variety of poets from Hardy to Rilke. He analyzes a variety of Auden's favorite devices but does not come to the point of definition or evaluation of their effect except to say frequently that he has written too much and too easily. "He has written a few poems memorable by the strictest standards . . . He has produced some fine songs, and been unusually successful in light ironic verse. Much of his work is faulty . . ." We should like to have had more specific evidence for Mr. Hoggart's vague but cautiously unstated assumption that he is a major figure to be put beside Yeats and Eliot.

This is unkind to Auden, for he is a minor talent mightily touted by publicity and the claque of the cliques. His poetry does not stand up to re-reading or careful study. But his effects when taken at high speed can be diverting and pleasing.

The poetic activity of Auden and his decade (the thirties) was based on a misreading of Eliot and a deep ignorance of Joyce and Pound. Auden's effort was to return poetry to the level of the informal essay in verse while retaining some Eliotic trappings.

Although Mr. Hoggart refuses to assume the responsibility of locating his poet in the tradition of letters, he has provided a useful collection of aids, quotations, and facts which will make Auden more accessible to an elementary level of readers.

—H. MARSHALL MCLUHAN

St. Michael College
University of Toronto

Fifty Years of the American Novel, 1900-1950. Ed. by Harold C. Gardiner, S.J. Scribner's. \$3.00.

The Modern Novel in America, 1900-1950. By Frederick J. Hoffman. Regnery. \$3.00.

These two books, almost simultaneously given the public, show interesting similarities and more provocative differences. The field of study, as is evidenced by their titles, is identical, and the same novelists, in the main, are discussed. Basically the schemes of organization are different: Mr. Hoffman is a solo performer; Father Gardiner, the impresario of a company of fourteen. Mr. Hoffman is free to range over the entire field, to look back with more panoramic view into the nineteenth century, as he does through James and Howells, and to conclude with a few prophetic peerings into the future. Father Gardiner's critics are each limited to consideration of a single novelist whose work demanded attention—"rather arbitrary limits," Father Gardiner says in his "Foreword," but entirely justified. (Parenthetically it might be observed that the reviewer's primary task is to appraise such a book in accord with the editor's announced intention: to assay whether he achieves what he set out to

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do and not to quarrel with him because he did not choose another objective.)

Father Gardiner, meeting an urgent need, loses no opportunity to emphasize that his concern is with "a Christian appraisal; to offer a volume 'truly representative of Catholic literary scholarship.' It is that. His critics must and do weigh 'the extent to which the author [the novelist he considers] comes to grips with the life of man in action, and that is inevitably to involve man in the sphere of morals.' The concern with *that* involvement of man is precisely the most important omission in the greater part of Mr. Hoffman's analyses. As cogent as his critical vision may be, its concern is with the historic and critical progress of the American novel from the dominant viewpoint of the social and economic man, and only passingly the spiritual man bound by a moral code.

This is no implication that he himself philosophically accepts this narrower outlook. He treats his novelists in relation to their own attitudes, yet he does not indicate that many outstanding figures in fiction projected no lasting significances nor values because they failed to recognize man in the fullness of his nature. As announced, his treatise is essentially concerned with two antagonistic schools which were earliest embodied in the persons of Henry James and Frank Norris. "The crucial facts of James' place in modern American fiction are two," he writes. "The first . . . is his concentration upon method and form in a world where these were naturally touched upon only incidentally. The second may be said to have had a more immediately cogent effect upon the novel's history. It involved a difference of view over what precisely was to be known as the moral sense or the moral purpose of the novel. This was not dissimilar to the question of 'literature and life' which Norris and others had raised."

But Norris and those who followed the naturalistic school after him did not join that debate; they dismissed it. Mr. Hoffman seems himself to have largely forgotten it as he advances to later writers. His survey, then, in approach, is not the Christian but the secularistic. But in his conclusions about his novelists, he is surprisingly close to those of Father Gardiner's company. Whether the latter will agree with the following, his final prediction, is a matter of conjecture: "There is little likelihood that the first rate novels of the next decade will be written by men who produced the good work of the past. They will come, perhaps, from new American writers who have been trained and disciplined and who have both something to say and a clear notion of the best means of saying it." To the task he has set himself, Mr. Hoffman has brought many fine qualities. His critical judgments are logically derived from the bases he establishes; and his 50 year parade, its detachments plainly bannered, should prove of considerable value to all students of fiction. A reader might wish he had included some one American Catholic novelist: even if there are none who are outstanding, there are several whose work is equal to and better than some writers who are mentioned.

So ably do many of Father Gardiner's critics write and so sound are the majority of their appraisals, that one is left with the wish for more—indeed that this or that one would separately write his or her own full survey of the fifty years. The "diversity of opinion," which an editor notes is "a symptom of the wide but unflabby tolerance that marks all the subsequent studies," is very little apparent. Nor could it be, since they do not meet on the same ground. Michael Moloney on Hemingway might differ from Edward J. Drummond's appraisal of Dreiser, or vice versa. But C. Carroll Hollis is necessarily confined to Sinclair Lewis; N. Elizabeth Monroe, who has

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done a superior job, to Ellen Glasgow. Robert C. Healey has more latitude since his paper is "Novelists of the War: a Bunch of Dispossessed," and so has Nicholas Joost whose concluding paper, "'Was All for Naught:' Robert Penn Warren and New Directions in the Novel," is typical of the excellencies of his companions' contributions and one of the Gardiner book's high peaks. His subject demands prophecy, and here he is optimistic. He writes of one of Warren's heroes and one each of Crawford Powers' and Robert Bowen's: "These are two affirmations in reply to the question so desperately posed by Jeremiah Beaumont. They are not doctrinaire; they are grounded fully in experience; they do not negate reality, they face it and affirm it in all its terror and grandeur; above all they insist on the worth of living. If, as we learn from the history of the world's literatures, the enduring is the true and the good and not merely the immediately attractive; and if the American art of the novel is to endure; then surely the affirmations of Father Cawder and Tom Daley—and how many other affirmations yet unwritten—must be read when in library stacks the counsels of despair quietly moulder."

With his Dos Passos critique, Herbert Marshall McLuhan attempts something different from what is called for by the editor's pattern of one critic to one author in a presentation of his novelist in relationship to a host of other writers. While effectively erudite, this departure is cabined by space requirements, nor does Mr. McLuhan give the expected insights into Dos Passos himself. Those insights are notably keen elsewhere: Charles A. Brady on Marquand (certainly one of the most satisfying contributions), Riley Hughes on Fitzgerald, Frank O'Malley on Farrell, and Francis X. Connolly on Willa Cather; these men illuminate their subjects without resort to glittering but confusing pedantry. Like Joost's,

these papers prompt the demand for more. One feels, too, that Gerard S. Sloyan, John S. Kennedy, Ernest Sandeen, found space requirements prevented the fullness of contributions which even as they stand are highly valuable. Criticism of the selection of Anne Fremantle—one whose first-hand observations of the American scene are quite recent—to discuss Edith Wharton, which she does with no special profundity, can perhaps be turned aside since Mrs. Wharton's own milieu was so closely related to the European.

If Mr. Hoffman in his secularist appraisals is little concerned with spiritual values, Father Gardiner's volume might be criticized from across the fence because it does not more thoroughly examine the social and economic world which many of these novelists reflect and in which they found impetus. This dissent would be only partially true—explicitly and comprehensively, yes; implicitly, no. Father Gardiner and his critics have produced a volume of distinction and scholarship and brought a new vitality to their chosen field.

—JOHN GILLAND BRUNINI

The Strange Children. By Caroline Gordon. Scribners. \$3.50.

Fear at My Heart. By Mary Harris. Sheed and Ward. \$2.50.

A young girl is the main character of each of these two impressive novels, and the children are alike in one respect, though they differ in another equally important. Caroline Gordon's Lucy knows too much, in many ways, for her own good; Miss Harris' Anthea knows too little. But they are both searching, in their adolescent way, for a very fundamental answer. Anthea is on the way to learning it fully when the story ends; Lucy has got a faint glimpse of it and we can lay the book down with but the hope that it will become clearer to her.

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Into the Southern home of Lucy and her parents come visitors, mainly Uncle Tubby and a married couple, the husband recently converted to the Church and deeply religious, the wife beautiful, but unstable to the point of approaching insanity. They talk, in the sophisticated fashion we associate with what is called the station wagon, cocktail set, and little Lucy is generally around, quiet as a mouse in the corner, to overhear them. What she hears is not too edifying—references to divorces and various scandals and so on—but she does not, of course, get the real drift of it all. She does know, however, that there is much unhappiness and rootlessness surrounding her, and the poignance of the tale lies in her inarticulate puzzling over the why of it all.

As counterpoint to this rather arid atmosphere is the encampment of Holy Rollers gathered for a religious revival. They, for all their faith healing and fanaticism, at least have some positive values in their lives, and Lucy feels a strange fascination for them that is not merely youthful awe at their fervor.

But most significant in the story is the faint symbolism of the little crucifix. Lucy finds it in the guest room of the convert, and purloins it for a few days. Every now and again she brings it out and studies it, feeling that it has some meaning, that it wants to say something to her which she is not yet tuned to catch. The story ends with Uncle Tubby running off with the neurotic wife, and with the sophisticates not much changed.

Caroline Gordon seems to be suggesting that the really strange children in the book are the adults, and that Lucy is perhaps on the verge of wisdom that will come to her when she will have solved the riddle presented by the little crucifix.

The revelations that come to little Anthea find her, on the other hand, more prepared to receive them. She has been almost hermetically sealed off from religion by her scientist-mother and literary father, but

when an Irish cook is engaged and begins to mother the lonely child, the first time Bridget says, "Our Blessed Lord," Anthea hears the name "with a curious sense of consolation, as if it had been something she had been waiting to hear for a long time."

From that day she is looking for the faith, though without seeing clearly that that is her quest. She searches for it in the family of the minister across the street, where she gets affection not experienced at home, especially after the death of her father, about whom she wonders whether he could possibly be one of the "Holy Souls." She searches for it when she goes off to boarding school—and there is led directly towards it when she meets a Catholic boarder and spends the holidays with her and the wise old grandmother. The book ends with Anthea learning the Divine Praises.

This summary cannot, I suppose, avoid giving the impression that *Fear at My Heart* is on the sentimental side. It is not, by any means. It is a perceptive study of a young girl's *anima naturaliter Christiana* fumbling its way to the truth, and it is all set in what must be the normal atmosphere of many young English girls. It is finely written and deeply thoughtful. The only adverse criticism I have, and it is surely small, is that the title of Miss Harris' book would have fitted *The Strange Children* better.

—HAROLD C. GARDINER

The Tudor Books of Private Devotion. By Helen C. White. The University of Wisconsin Press. \$4.75.

The purpose of this study is to illustrate through the popular books of devotion the changes in belief and attitude of Englishmen during the troubled period of the Reformation. Miss White has two introductory chapters leading up to the pre-Reformation *Psalter* and the English *Primer*, of which there are many versions, but all of which contain "the Hours of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Litany, the Office for

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the Dead, and the Commendations, or prayers following the Office for the Dead." The *Primer* was very popular with all classes of laymen, but it became politically unsuitable after Henry VIII had broken with Rome and had declared himself Supreme Head of the Church in England. Loyal subjects, however, needed judicious weaning before they could readily digest the unskimmed milk of protestantism, and editors of works of devotion proceeded cautiously.

The first changes occurred in the *Goodly Prymer in Englyshe* of 1535. The editor preserved most of the old Calendar, even keeping Saint Thomas of Canterbury, for whom Henry VIII had a not unnatural detestation; but he pruned some of the vigils, and he changed "Pope" to "Bishop of Rome." He substituted "Come unto me all ye that labor" for "Ave Maria" at the beginning of the Little Office, and though he printed the *Dirige* and other prayers for the dead, he commented on their abuse as work "of darkness and deep ignoraunce," wherein "we have ronge, and songe, mumbled, murmured, and pituously pewled forthe a certayne sorte of psalmes . . . for the soules of our christen brethrene and sistern."

So far the *Primer*, though "inspired," was not openly an official publication. Ten years later, Richard Grafton, the King's Printer, issued "The Primer, set foorth by the Kynges majestie and his Clergie, to be taught, lerned, and read: and none other to be used throughout all his dominions." In this version the Office has been drastically cut and the final prayers for the dead deleted. The Saints have been liquidated from the Litany and some new petitions added, among them: "From all sedition and privy conspiracy, from the tyranny of the Bishop of Rome, and all his detestable enormities, from al false doctryne and heresy, from al hardness of harte and comtempt of thy worde and commaundement: Good lorde deliver us." Protestantism has now arrived.

Similar changes are noted by Miss White

in books of meditation and other guides for the devout life. These lend themselves less to direct propaganda, but they could be a cause of considerable uncharitableness. In 1582, Father Robert Persons, the Jesuit, produced his *Book of Christian Exercise*, a guide for devout and perplexed Catholics. The work was so popular and so well adapted for its purpose that an Anglican minister, the Rev. Edmund Bunny, put forth a protestant version, which was of great comfort for the godly, but which generated much heat between the two authors.

Miss White's study is not easy for the reader; it requires close reading and considerable knowledge of the complex historical events of the years 1530-1560. A date chart linking these events with the books discussed would have been helpful. Nor again are the charges which occurred within the various publications always clear. Miss White frequently uses the phrase "attenuation of the Marian elements," and a reader who has never used the *Horae Beatae Virginis* may well wonder what it all means, especially as at one time "Marian" refers to Mary, Queen of Heaven, and at another to Mary, Queen of England (1553-1558).

The book has, however, more than a specialized interest, for current events show that dictators follow the same pattern; they dare not allow divided allegiance, and if the subject is allowed to approach God at all, it can only be through the head of the State. The reader will find greatest value in this book if he treats it as an appendix to Father Philip Hughes' *The Reformation in England*; and he should read Father Hughes first.

—G. B. HARRISON

University of Michigan

Literature through Art: A New Approach to French Literature. By Helmut A. Hatzfeld. Oxford University Press. \$7.50.

In an age of specialization and departmentalization Helmut Hatzfeld, as a climax to his career as a literary scholar, has pro-

duced a book that is broad, humane, and embracing. Its scope includes not only the history of French literature from 1000 to today, but also a panorama of the French art of almost a thousand years. Its chapters move flowingly, but it is buttressed by some four hundred bibliographical citations and by a hundred half-tone illustrations.

Briefly, Hatzfeld's problem is this: how in literary criticism may one avoid the subjectivities of aesthetic or merely psychological appreciation? His book is devoted to demonstrating that one very important objective check is a study of the parallels and analogies between the history of French literature and French art as being an indissoluble unity and the expression, changing from era to era, of a common spirit. He emerges with the conviction of the unity of any culture and also with the contention that the primacy (he is insistent upon this primacy) of an aesthetic approach must be supplemented by historical criticism and by the history of ideas. Such a study is open to the temptation of mere theorizing, but the author has instead built up his book through a wealth of examples and illustrations.

The book is arranged chronologically—from the Romanesque and Gothic epoch to impressionism and surrealism—but in a final chapter he points out that running throughout the volume are several approaches which together constitute his methodology.

The most incontrovertible of these is employed where the details of a literary text are elucidated by a picture, or vice versa. For instance, to use rather obvious examples, the lively dialogues of cavalier love casuistry in the *romans courtois* are linked to Scholastic disputations as their sources, as demonstrated by the presence on cathedral portals of the apostles arranged in discussion groups; or conversely, the winged apocalyptic animals and other symbolic beasts that appear on Romanesque tympana reveal their secrets to the reader of the bestiaries.

Next, the very concepts and motifs of literature are clarified by the arts of design and vice versa. For example, the typically baroque feeling of infinite space as found in Pascal and in the gardens of Versailles; or the metaphysical despair of the modern world as suggested in *Clown's Head* by Rouault is described in detail in the novels of Bloy or Bernanos.

Or, either literary-stylistic-linguistic forms are made comprehensible by art forms or the reverse applies. *The Chessboard of Gris* corresponds to Valéry's *Le Cimetière marin*; the seemingly illogical tenses, the endless co-ordination and word order based on psychological criteria in Joinville are parallel to medieval perspective and the simultaneous co-ordination of successively occurring scenes.

A further conviction runs through the book: that the "laws" of Lessing in his *Laocöon* about the boundaries between poetry and painting are of the nature of absolutes. He introduces comparisons between the work of such people as Lebrun and Pascal, Hugo and Gautier or Delacroix, Balzac and Daumier, Courbet and Flaubert, Monet or Degas and Zola, Cézanne and Seurat, Gauguin and Rimbaud, Rousseau and Cocteau or Breton treating in their own ways the same material. It is with the impressionists that Hatzfeld finds that artists begin to violate the *Laocöon* "laws" (as he calls them). He puts forward such people as Braque or Apollinaire as examples of violators.

It is here that some will especially question his position. Is one, for instance, to say that those pictures of Picasso (or Duchamp) are unsuccessful in which are presented simultaneously a multiplicity of aspects which ordinarily can be seen only in a time sequence? It is indicative that Hatzfeld's treatment of Picasso—in the eyes of many, one of the greatest contemporary French painters—is cursory.

Indeed it might be said that in his treatment of the modern period he becomes not a little embarrassed by the ambivalent

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aspects of modern art. Perhaps he takes insufficiently into account that the history of French art beginning with the impressionists has been a reaction against the realistic photographic tradition which had reigned for so long and against which a reaction was both necessary and salutary. He allows, for instance, little room for non-representational painting, because he holds that "pure poetry" has failed. It is here that his book, it seems to me, is most open to criticism. It is here, too, that his study is most challenging. He attempts to qualify his comments on contemporary French art and to see two directions within it, but the result is not completely satisfying.

It is, of course, particularly difficult to see the present with detachment and perspective, and this probably accounts for the feeling one has that the earlier parts of the book are more solid than the later—and it would seem that part of the difficulty is that Lessing stands in the way.

The defect I see in the earlier chapters is not the fault of the author so much as of the physical limitations of the book. It

makes one wish that the Oxford Press (the book won the MLA-Oxford Award) had put three or four volumes at Hatzfeld's disposal. He introduces enough examples to make his case a sound one, but this would have enabled him to suggest more often that there are not unimportant exceptions and that further qualification might be necessary.

But that, after all, is work for further scholars and critics. Hatzfeld has, himself, suggested the need for a similar study of the parallel between music and literature, and such studies ought to be extended to other countries and cultures. He not only has laid down the general outlines but has himself brought to bear on them a mind rich with examples from the span of literary and artistic culture covering almost a thousand years. He has pointed out one series of methods which, if used with great care, can help towards a more objective appreciation of the unity of all the arts.

—JOHN PICK

Marquette University

The review of Wallace Fowle's *Sun Suicide* in the last number of *Renaissance* was based on galley proofs of the novel; publication unfortunately has been postponed.

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Tuesday, April 15

Greetings by the Most Rev. John J. Wright, D.D., and the Hon. Andrew B. Holstrom; introduced by Rev. Michael Pierce, S.J.

Panel: **Newman as a Man of Letters.** Rev. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J., chairman. "Newman as a Literary Critic," Dr. Francis X. Connolly; "The Poetry of Newman," Rev. Daniel Honan; "Newman as a Novelist," Dr. Margaret Grennan; "Newman & T. S. Eliot on Religion & Culture," Dr. Alvan S. Ryan. Discussion leaders: Dr. Jeremiah K. Durick; Miss Lucile Harrington; Mother Maguire, R.S.C.J.; Dr. James E. Tobin; Frank O' Malley; Dr. Joseph Keenan.

Rev. Terence L. Connolly, S.J., chairman. "Newman: The Remembrance of Things Past," Dr. A. Dwight Culler.

Luncheon. Rev. Norman Weyand, S.J., chairman; Robert Wilberforce, speaker.

Rev. James F. Redding chairman: "Newman as a Defender of the Faith," The Most Rev. John J. Wright, D.D. Discussion leaders: Rev. Martin Healy; Rev. Daniel Honan.

Rev. Paul W. Facey, S.J., chairman. "Newman & the Early Church Fathers," Mother Mary Lawrence, S.H.C.J.; "Newman's Vision of the Church," Rev. John M. Oesterreicher. Discussion leaders: Rev. Walter J. Burghardt, S.J.; Rev. Jerome Kelly, O.F.M.; Rev. Pierre Conway, O.P.

Annual business meeting for members of CRS.

Round table discussion. Rev. Charles F. Donovan, S.J., chairman. Panel speakers: Rev. Edmond Darvil Benard; Dr. Dwight Culler; Rev. Harold C. Gardiner, S.J.; Rev. Daniel Honan; Dr. Charles De Koninck; Dr. Joseph Keenan; Dr. Thomas P. O'Neill; Dr. Francis Rogers.

Wednesday, April 16

Mass of the Holy Angels. The Most Rev. John J. Wright, D.D., celebrant. Sermon: "Newman & the Ven. Dominic Barberi, C.P.," Rev. David Bulman, C.P.

Panel: **Newman's Idea of a University.** Rev. Leo R. Ward, C.S.C., chairman. "The Background & Theory of the Idea," Rev. Edmond Darvil Benard; "The Actuality," Rev. Charles F. Donovan, S.J.; "In the Secular University," Dr. Francis Rogers; "In the Catholic University," Sister Marie Eugenie, C.I.M.; "Supplement to Newman: Relativism & the University," Rev. John E. Wise, S.J., Discussion leaders: Dr. Daniel Walsh; Rev. William Lynch, S.J.; Rev. Jerome Kelly, O.F.M.; Dr. Thomas P. O'Neill; Weston M. Jenks, Jr.

Informal luncheon.

Rev. Pierre Conway, O.P., chairman. "Newman in Our Times," Dr. Martin J. Svaglic. "Newman's Attitude Towards Scholasticism," Dr. Charles De Koninck.

Panel: **Newman's Influence on the Thought & Literature of Europe.** Rev. Victor R. Yanitelli, S.J., chairman. "France," Rev. Victor R. Yanitelli, S.J.; "Great Britain," Mrs. Anne Fremantle; "Germany," Brother Gregory, F.S.C.; "Italy," Sister Maria Serafina, S.C. Discussion leaders: Sister Camille, O.S.F.; Sister Irmina, S.S.J.; Sister Marie Louise, O.P.; Rev. John M. Oesterreicher; Frank O'Malley; Dr. Joseph Keenan.

Meeting of the CRS board of directors.

Symposium dinner. The Most Rev. John J. Wright, D.D., presiding. Rev. Robert I. Gannon, S.J., speaker.

**Write for further details: Executive Director,
Renaissance Society, Mount Mary College, Milwaukee 10, Wis.**

